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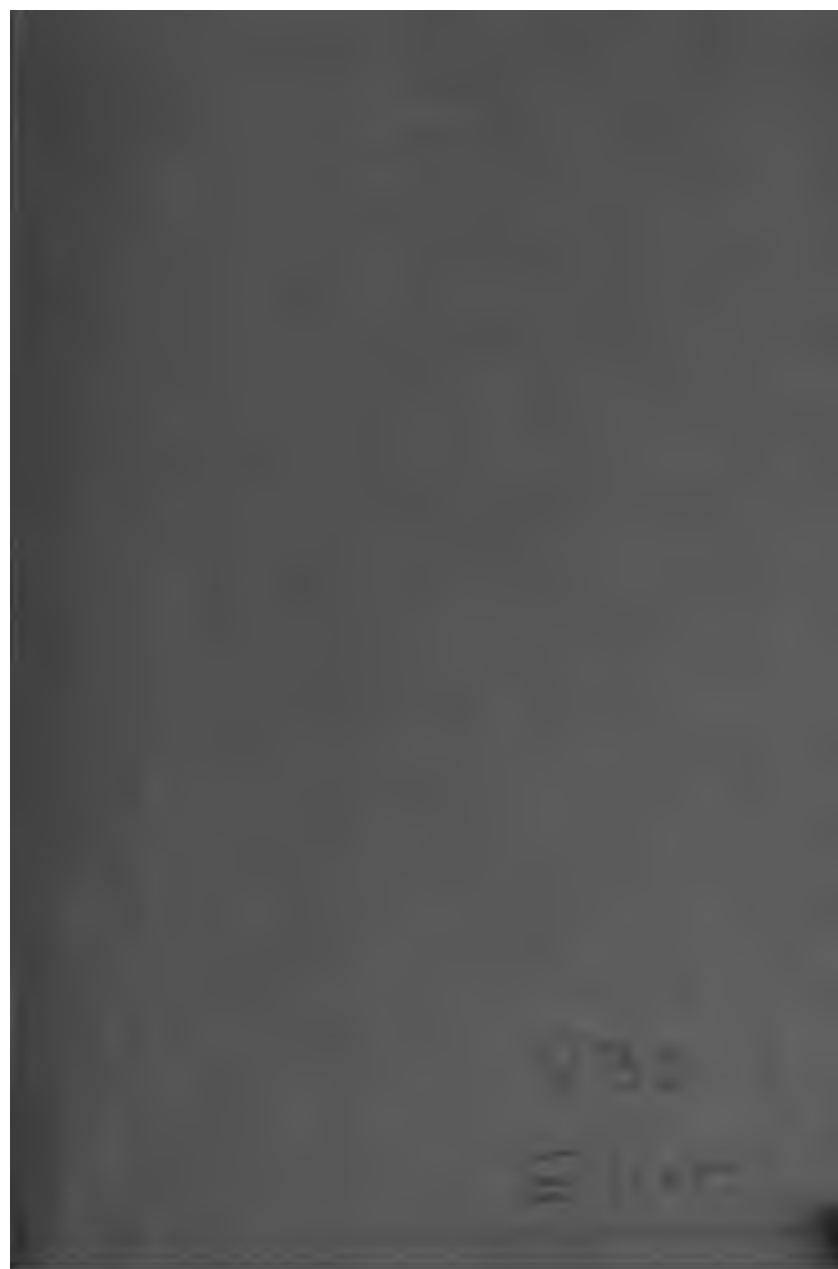
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Every Woman's Right.

EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT

A NOVEL

BY

Nina Miller Elliott

Author of

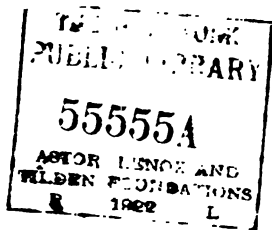
"HELEN BLAIR"

and

"When the Heart Is Young"



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EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT

CHAPTER I

The sun streamed through the studio windows, the shadows upon the floor were dancing with glee, seemingly mocking the woman who stood staring fixedly at the portrait of Col. Robert Wrenn that was nearly completed. A copy of *Town Gossip* was clinched in her hand.

"'Tis not true, only idle gossip! I will not believe these lying words—only last night we planned our home!" Something seemed to flame within her; she stretched out her arms. "Help me attain my dream,—Oh God!" she implored.

Art is very well, but it doesn't fill every part of one's being. Love in its first awakening had come to Dora Temple. In the sublime truth and

ignorance of youth she had given her all; she did not know that men, honored among men, loved to-day and to-morrow lulled to sleep the shallow craving; neither did she know that love was often auctioned on the block to the highest bidder. Cupid has had more masters than any black slave of olden times.

The day passed as all unhappy days do, slowly. Dora tried hard to feel the same enthusiasm in her work. Try as she would, however, she couldn't keep the announcement of the coming wedding of Robert Wrenn and a wealthy debutante from her mind. Her hand trembled, she bore more heavily than usual upon the artist's rest before her; her strokes were heavy, failing to be blend as they should, while even the tubes of paint were squeezed with greater force.

Altogether the article had upset her. Oh, if eight o'clock would only come; just to hear the familiar step, the quick opening of the door, the cheery "Hello!"

"How disgusted Robert will be," she thought, "to think I am so foolish as to let a gossiping article in *Town Gossip* make me unhappy. Pshaw! Don't they have to fill their hateful pages with something to amuse the idle rich? Of course, if

one of the desirable men is seen a few times with a real society belle, he *must* be serious and the engagement is eagerly watched for."

Thus she reasoned reassuringly until a song burst from her lips as she dexterously plied her brush. Why shouldn't she sing? Robert loved her; he would soon be there to tell her and assure her of his devotion. She was now putting the last finishing touches to his portrait—his gift to his millionaire father. How carefully she had worked, how she had studied him! She so wanted his portrait to speak, as it were; the fine points of the expressive mouth, the alert expression of the dark eye, and those features had been faithfully reproduced by this master hand. She knew Robert's father would be pleased, and she felt sure that the reward of his (Robert's) love was a greater price than any artist had ever before received for her work.

The day's work over, Dora carefully cleaned pallet and brushes, made the studio tidy, placing the large arm chair by the window that looked out into the Square, far up Fifth Avenue. The lights were beginning to twinkle here and there.

How she loved to watch life as it passed by from this window! She hung the smoking jacket

upon the chair, placed ash-tray and matches nearby, stood the foot stool in place, and quickly removing her artist's smock, she stood before the open closet anxiously scanning her wardrobe in an effort to decide which dress was the most becoming.

Finally she took from its hanger a soft grey gown of net over pink, simply made. One large rose at her waist and the small string of pearls (Robert's last gift) were her only ornaments. She needed no rouge—her cheeks were crimson with expectation, her brown eyes shown like twin stars.

She stood before the long window, every detail of her costume showing the careful attention it had received. She flashed a smile at her image, knowing full well that she was a fitting mate for any man of aristocratic birth. She had the blue blood of generations flowing through her veins. Now that she was ready to receive the Honorable Robert Wrenn, a still small voice kept whispering, *is it true?*

When a thought once finds its way into one's mind it is hard to get rid of, so doubt was again creeping stealthily in upon her. Clasp ing her hands above her head and gazing out into the

square, Dora watched the throng moving along the shadowy walks.

Now and then a couple attracted her attention as they leaned close together, oblivious of the passing crowds, so deeply ingrossed in their own affairs were they. Suddenly she was brought back to the real things of life. Her bell pealed forth—she opened the door to be clasped in two strong arms. Warm kisses that filled her with joy carried all doubt away.

“Come, dear, I have promised that we join a party at The Glades for dinner—am late, hurry up.”

Seeing a shadow on her face, Robert asked quickly, “Why, Dora, don’t you wish to go? I thought *you* were always ready for the gay life.”

“Usually I am, but to-night, dear, I want you all to myself. It has been ages since we have spent a comfy, homey evening together—seems there are always friends to entertain or tickets to be used.”

Leaning against the piano, Robert Wrenn surveyed her critically.

“Wear your black hat, Dora, the one that drops so rakishly over your eyes.”

"Won't you please stay here at home with me just this time, dear?" pleaded Dora. "I don't know why, but Oh! I do wish you would! Let's go to Maria's for dinner and then come back here!"

But before she could finish, however, Robert, having lighted his cigar, said, decidedly: "Come, come! Put your hat on"—meantime watching her closely as she did as he told her. "Now that's all right. Gad! you're a stunner—a beauty!" Nervously keeping up this chatter of compliments, the hansom cab jolted along Fifth Avenue, turned into Broadway, and drew up in front of the most brightly lighted restaurant on that gay thoroughfare. He was well aware of the admiring and envious eyes that followed Dora and himself as the head-waiter led them to a table already occupied by a party of four. Introductions and cocktails followed.

After dinner the party went up the broad stairway to the ball room, where the gentlemen took turn about dancing with the girls.

Dora tried hard to forget the ache in her heart and enter into the gaiety with abandon and enthusiasm, but try as she would she could not keep the loneliness from her heart. She had learned

that loneliness is in the soul, no matter what the surroundings. As Robert was ordering more wine, she touched his hand.

"Please, dear, we have had plenty, don't you think we have? It is very late, let's go—the music has gone."

Gazing around the room where the last of the gay set were still drinking, Robert Wrenn laughed boisterously.

"Gad! Such a little lamb, when did you assume the goody, goody? I thought you seemed bored. Come, now, Dora, old girl, be yourself—what ails you?"

It was plain to be seen Robert Wrenn was feeling his numerous drinks—his flushed face, shining eyes, and the ugly smirk about his mouth all too plainly showed it.

With an effort Dora smiled, but drew herself away from him, as he leaned over to plant a kiss upon her cheek.

"Say, fellows, what do you think of making a night of it—there are many gay spots we can show the girls? Oh, don't worry about Dora," as he saw all eyes centered upon her. "She has developed into a real joy killer, gets tired early, but hangs on till the last bubble goes down, just the same—hey, kid?"

These remarks got for Wrenn the laugh he sought.

The two girls scented adventure and more wine and the men, keen to be seen with such beauties, clapped their hands loudly. "Sure, we will all stick!"

"We won't go home 'till morning," etc., was drunk in a toast to Dora.

"Get your wraps, girls, while I pay the check."

Taking a morocco bound check book from his pocket, Wrenn wrote the sum and signed his name with the ease of a man accustomed to exorbitant prices. Leaving the restaurant singing "He's a jolly good fellow," the bibulous party filed into a carriage, and tossing the doorman a tip, rode down Broadway, their ribald song floating back to that old servitor, so accustomed to the antics of the rich.

"Some jolly bunch that!" he observed, adding "Oh! well, Mr. Wrenn is rich enough to take his friends when and where he pleases."

Smiling at the generous tip he still held in his hand, he carefully opened the door for another party of pleasure seekers.

CHAPTER II

It is now two weeks since the gay party downtown. Dora knew the truth—Robert was to be married at Easter time; the papers had glowing accounts of pre-nuptial entertainments. The artist colony found plenty to keep them busy discussing the affair—wondering what Dora would do—if she would make a fuss or go into a romantic decline. It was generally known in art circles that Wrenn paid devoted attention to the young artist and hinted there might be a wedding, as *Dora*, at least, was really in love.

Now, many eyebrows were lifted in mute inquiry. "You know, dear," said one gossip of uncertain age and known for her different affairs, "Dora has certainly been treated badly. She is a thoroughly unsophisticated girl—believes everything one tells her, and I think it is high time these young millionaires are made to understand that broken hearts and flirtations must be atoned for!"

So the worldly drank tea and rolled their choice bits of gossip. How little they knew Dora Tem-

ple, who four years before came among them, worked hard, and studied with the best teachers. Her pictures at last sold well, she had individuality, and she went about her work paying little attention to fellow artists, a quaint, girlish creature.

Robert Wrenn had been introduced to her at the Art Exhibit, where her first picture to win a ribbon was hung. The canvas catalogued, "Nature," had attracted attention—the boldness of the subject and the delicacy with which it was treated evidenced a masterly execution which stamped "Nature" as the picture of the yearly exhibit. The subject of the sketch, a young girl just turning into womanhood, stood upon the bank of a small stream, secluded by a tangled growth of vines and low willow trees, her clothing artistically scattered about. She was gazing intently into the water, smiling in anticipation of a swim in the secluded waters.

Robert Wrenn, a regular visitor of art exhibitions and a collector of gems from all over the world, stood earnestly gazing at the picture, with eyes that plainly saw genius.

"A wonderful study," he said, as Noltre, the owner of the galleries, came to join him.

"Yes! a wonder in color and type," he continued, examining the catalogue. "Dora Temple, a new exhibitor—never heard of her."

"This is her first time to get a public hearing," observed Noltre, "a mere woman—and such a subject—would you like to meet her? She is having tea in the Robin Room with admirers; you know the furore a new artist creates."

"Indeed, yes, but wait—is she some old, worn-out spinster that has dared to brave Uncle Anthony Comstock—or worse, a suffragette?" queried Wrenn with a knowing wink.

"Neither, Wrenn, a real live girl, full of thrills and laughter—a peach, Wrenn, a veritable peach!"

"Lead on, Noltre—lead on!" cried Robert.

Just as the two men turned from the canvas, "Ah, there she is now—the small girl with the big hat."

"Ye Gods, man," exclaimed Wrenn, "not that child?"

Several well known artists hurried to speak to the girl, who, flushed and smiling with triumph, and wholly unconscious of the many admiring glances—slim of stature, a mass of dusky hair, eyes that gleamed with enthusiasm, a quaintly pointed

chin which took away all suggestion of sensuality from the fullness of her lips, her laugh, a joyous bubble, every fibre of her radiant self, leaping to meet the call of the world.

Robert Wrenn found himself awkwardly and half-dazedly acknowledging the introduction. Never before had the pleasing compliments society demanded failed him—the only thing he could think of was the beautiful creature before him.

At once he made up his mind to own "Nature," no matter what the price, hence the blunt declaration: "Miss Temple, I have made Noltre an offer for your canvas, but now that I have had the honor of meeting you I will double the amount."

Dora turned her face upward and looked him full in the eyes, clasping her hands tightly: "Oh, Mr. Wrenn, you indeed do me proud! I am afraid my head may be turned! You see, I read the art journals and am well acquainted with the men who buy at the salons—for Robert Wrenn, the critic and connoisseur, to admire my first exhibit! Oh, sir, you flatter me!"

Thus began the friendship which grew steadily until the full flower of love had ripened and bloomed luxuriantly. Dora lived, worked and dreamed. She gave her all and counted no cost.

Four years her Eden had lasted. Now, the ruins were piling high about her—she was to be cast aside as an ugly garment.

As she stood gazing around the studio that was filled with his gifts, constant reminders of his love and thoughtfulness, her mind was filled with visions of the past—hardly a day that did not register some happy thought, yet she was not changed—she was the same Dora.

Robert was really leaving her—this very day he was coming to say good-bye and settle the *one* question, one *real and vital thing!* What would become of Daniel, the fruit of their love? Was he to go nameless? Was the burden of their sin (if sin it be) to fall upon him?

The mother instinct had awakened the thought of harm to her child—had filled her with horror. She would make one last plea for the boy, a name! “I will gladly work for you, dear child,” she breathed—she knew well the promise of marriage was a thing of the past, was ended. Her heart beat furiously, her brain seemed on fire. She walked the floor trying to plan her future.

“Robert! Oh Robert! give him his right—your name—don’t send him into this cold, terrible world nameless! I promise never to offend

or worry you, I will go away with my boy. You shall never hear of us again. You have money to buy your freedom, and no one need ever know!"

Unrestrained sobs shook her body convulsively. The full realization of the past held her with abject fear. She trembled at thought of the future. A knock came at the door. Quickly gaining control of herself, Dora hastened to open it. A woman in grey uniform stood holding the hand of a boy three years old. At sight of her child all the primitive mother love in her nature seemed to find expression in the cry that came from her lips. Clasp ing the boy in her arms, she frantically hugged him to her, and covered his face with kisses.

"Call me, mother, darling! I *am* your mother! I *will* not deny you."

Among all animals from dog to man *mother* love is always a sublime thing! When Dora knew that Robert was failing her, she rose to the epic moment of her life—her sin of transgression would be bravely borne. With the boy close to her heart she murmured:

"Your father may fail you, but I am your mother—through love you came to me; I brought you into this world—God gave you to me, you are



"Call me Mother, darling boy—I am your Mother, I will not deny you!"

The nurse saw before her a woman representing the Divine Mother, whose Son came and was denied by man, yet He lived.



mine by right of birth! I shall never give you up, my baby boy!"

The nurse, accustomed as she was to all sorts of unhappiness, bowed her head. The woman before her represented the Divine mother whose Son came and was denied by man, yet he lived.

"Martha, will you go with me?" queried Dora, at last. "I am leaving here, going far, far away—I must! I must! I will work—for a broken heart there is nothing but work, work for *somebody*."

With both arms clasping the child, Dora spoke quietly and fervently.

"To you, Daniel Strange, I dedicate my life. I must perform the great task thus thrust upon me. The strings of fate draw tighter and tighter—nature is calling—mother love is above and beyond all else! I bow to destiny."

The opening and closing of the door caused both women to turn. Dora looked into eyes that seemed to bore her through and through. Robert Wrenn stood gazing at the scene before him—the nurse, the child! Never had he seen his son; the advent of the infant was only an unhappy incident. Why should Dora worry so? There were thousands of children in New York institutions.

Didn't the heads of benevolent societies send each year trainloads of foundlings to the South and West to be adopted and reared by kind-hearted people with the love of humanity in their souls, or maybe to take the place of a child that had closed its eyes in death? Many childless men and women give homes to orphaned children.

As their eyes met, it seemed they stood alone, measuring each other before the battle.

"Martha, take *my son* back to the Convent; I will come tomorrow."

Quietly buttoning the child's coat, Dora kissed him fervently upon each cheek, with her arms folded around him, her lips glued to his, for a moment.

"Won't you say, 'bye-bye, mother?'" pleaded Dora. The little fellow seemed to feel the heart throbs, waving his hand, he called to her, "Don't cry, 'mobber,' come tomorrow and bring Dannie the biggest horn what you can buy." "

The door closed, both man and woman were silent. Robert Wrenn measured with his eyes every feature of the girl who had given him the one perfect love of a lifetime. Today he saw the *woman*—he knew the compact he had hoped to have Dora sign was a worthless scrap of paper.

He pulled himself together and with visible effort he managed to get his voice under control.

"I was not aware that either the child or sisters at the Convent knew you were his mother."

The light died out of her eyes, her hands clenched. Graphically she depicted the utter loneliness of a human soul, a life in ashes. Calmly she seated herself upon the couch, motioning Robert to a place beside her.

"Yes, Robert, yesterday I told the Mother Superior *all*. My soul, instead of being ashamed, then was born! I am now able to apply the touchstone of truth to each human experience, to *question* accepted standards, to honestly look into the heart of the *universe* for comfort, to give him a fighting chance."

As she spoke the old-time eagerness returned, her eyes flashed determination. Rising, she stood before him, a woman scorned, but not defiled. Pointing to the door, with imperious dignity, she uttered this malediction upon him:

"Go, you despoiler of youth, wed the woman with her millions! May your home be what *you* deserve, and let God be the judge! In a few weeks I am leaving this place—I am going to battle for my son—make the world respect him

and *me*. Is there any justice in that you can repudiate your son—you and the *wife* you have chosen because she moved in your set? Go—before I forget my vow to submit calmly to my fate!” And thus they separated—they had reached the parting of the ways!

CHAPTER III

Dora Temple Strange of Denver was waiting impatiently to welcome Daniel. Today he would be home for good—no more school, no more college, a man now ready to build for himself! Fifteen years she had worked, counting no cost, all for Daniel. Each summer he came home to her—from high school to college she had watched him—from a sturdy boy to manhood she seen him develop into the man that she longed for him to be—honorable, kind and unselfish. Now the college days were over, Daniel would take his place in the world of workers, of ambitious men. She felt sure he would climb to some high place, that success in his chosen profession awaited him. As Dora stood waiting by the window, her mind traveled the long road of years back to the studio days when life was love and love was *law*. She stood here a fine creature in the sight of heaven, a splendid woman who could have made any man happy, in her heart a world of gentleness and understanding, yet her only confidant—herself.


The homecoming of Daniel was worth all the years of loneliness, her face had grown beautiful, her mind went round in circles over the dreary years she had waited, worked and waited, hoped and despaired! Now she was consumed with joy-hunger and a longing for life with a pulse in it. Now she was possessed with an understanding given only to women who love unhappily.

Denver had offered her the sanctuary she needed—*her home* a cottage on the outskirts of the city. The studio was a long room with low English ceiling, sky-light and a row of windows commanding a wonderful view of the snow-capped mountains. The North light streamed through the windows, making fantastic shadows along the highly polished floor.

Dora, on her arrival in the Western city, had established this home, afterward going about in a house to house canvass for pupils, taking along a portfolio of sketches. 'Ere the first year had passed, her class had grown and so much interest had been created that *society* had taken up the fad, and so it was she taught old and young, also taking orders for hand-painted china and pictures.

Martha had full charge of Daniel. He grew to chubby boyhood among artistic surroundings. His garden and pony-cart kept him out of doors most of the time. When he was twelve, he was sent to a school for boys. After graduation he was allowed to choose his own college. How proud she was when he chose Ann Harbor, Michigan, how proud her mother heart was beating as she thought of the night when he had decided the question left entirely to him! She could see him now as he said in answer to her question, "Why, son, are you choosing a Western college?"

"Well, I want to be a big Western man. Seems to me those Eastern colleges are too crowded for a man to grow much in. I prefer lots of air and plenty of room—in fact, nature appeals to me. I love the broad plains, the fields of grain and the mountains, the miles of trees—I just feel that your own nature develops into the human kind God loves best, if one stays closer to the trees, the birds and the wild flowers. Have you ever taken two daisies in your hand, one a wild flower, the other the florist's most highly cultivated beauty? The simple flower sends forth its sweet incense, you inhale the fragrance of the field, but the cultivated flower is odorless, stiff and cold.



Well, Mother, the crowded, over-cultivated East does not appeal to me—my future is here. Why, do you know, I now remember years back, how big I felt to be out of doors, driving about with Martha, with no walls to prevent my seeing out! Why, I even remember trying to wake up early to hear the rooster crow and listening for the katydids. So you see, mother, I am destined to be a son of the West.”

Dora heard the clock in the hall chime four times. He should be here by now. A car stopped. Martha, watching from the side door, saw him first. Both women hurried to meet him. Dropping his bags, he kissed first one and then the other. With his arms about them, he gave proof of his love, and the two women who loved him most were filled with joy. He was a man, *their* man; it was unimportant whether he was handsome or ugly, he was the personification of will, of courage, of purpose! His eyes, forehead and mouth were touched with a gentleness that seemed to accentuate the face of the man. He might be cruel, but he would take no pleasure in cruelty. Dora saw in Daniel all she desired. She felt sure he would climb step by step the ladder all mothers build in ambition for their sons. He

would be capable—already his feet were firmly planted upon the first step—the papers were all ready for him to sign, admitting him to the Junior partnership of the law firm of Brown & Scott, one of the oldest and most honored firms in Denver or the West. For months she had longed to tell him, but waited for him to come home. How she trembled with elation and pride.

“My son, my son!” She could restrain herself no longer, and, thrusting the paper into his hand she hurriedly left the room, saying: “Read that document, dear, then join Martha and me in the dining room—dinner is ready to be served.

An hour later Daniel appeared in the door. The dust of travel had been removed, his dark suit changed to light flannels.

“Mother, dear, you must not expect or allow me to say anything now—I am too full, there are no words sufficiently expressive of my elation,” he said, and, drawing Dora to him, rested her head upon his breast and kissed her fervently.

“I realize how many sacrifices you have laid upon the altar you erected to me, your fatherless boy. I am going to shoulder future burdens—now you are *my care*.”

Thus Martha found them. The three sat happily together around the table. Dora and Martha listened intently to Daniel. They realized he had absorbed knowledge like a sponge. His easy manner, beautifully modulated voice and excellent command of language, pronounced him a good conversationalist—he was evidently properly equipped for the profession he had himself chosen.

“We have friends coming out this evening, Daniel. Judge Brown 'phoned since you arrived—he is anxious to meet the new member of Brown & Scott. Since Lane retired to private life, there have been numerous applicants to be taken in. Daniel, I am very proud—I have already seen the gilt lettering, ‘Brown, Scott & Strange, Attorneys at Law.’ And Oh, how I wish you could know all the happiness, the sweet peace that flooded my soul as I stood there reading over and over *your name* associated with men who stand as such splendid exemplars of the profession of law!”


All through the evening, the mother-eye searched for marks of heredity that are almost sure to pass from father to son. It was with genuine thankfulness she could discover but one—in *phy-*

sique. Had the two men been shaped in the same mould, there couldn't have been two more perfect specimens of manhood.

The guests had departed and Dora and her son stood in the hall. Suddenly Daniel put his arms about his mother, and lifting her high above him, bounded up the stairs, and before she realized what he was doing, he had placed her in a big armchair in her bedroom—and there, kneeling by her as in childhood days, he fervently whispered: "Mother, mine! Little, self-sacrificing mother!"

And with her hand on his head she listened. She knew it was the heart of a strong man whose emotions had broken through the dignified bearing, not a weak, impassioned speech of sentimental youth.

Quietly they sat, hand in hand, silence more sacred than any words had fallen upon them. The sun was slowly sinking in the western sky, a blaze of yellow and red. Daniel reverently crossed himself as he kneeled in front of the small altar that was in the alcove of his room. Somehow the future loomed up bigger and more glorious, the one idea that possessed him was to be a worthy son of so noble a mother—ambition to succeed was more deeply rooted than ever.



The weeks and months passed quickly. Daniel industriously poured over briefs and law books. Judge Brown felt more assured each day of his worth; he insisted that Daniel should join several clubs and associate himself with the men-about-town. You know a lawyer must be a mixer, a reader of human nature and a clever companion—must not only *know the law*, but the world.

Without effort, Daniel Strange was admitted into the most exclusive clubs. He met men prominent in business, social and political circles. Among older men he was spoken of as the coming youngster of the West.

Dora continued her work with new energy and new zeal. Her heart and soul were bound up in Daniel. She read articles almost daily about him now. The newspapers noticed much that Daniel Strange did and said, his speeches on several occasions were in the daily newspapers. Society had singled him out for their fashionable and exclusive social attentions—he was a part of Denver.

Dora's pleasure was lively and sincere—a maternal pride, as if his fame reflected honor upon herself, and so it did. She had schooled herself to live only *now*. And the future? To her there was

no yesterday, the past she had blotted out forever—she had closed the gate of by-gones!

Daniel had been given her, in his strength—she was the mother of Daniel, nothing else mattered!

* * *

Daniel Strange, gliding along the mountain road in his small roadster, came upon a car in distress—a young girl at the wheel, a man tugging hard to replace a blown-out tire. Stopping alongside of them, Daniel lifted his hat. "May I give you a little help?" he asked. "Two are better at that job."

The young man turned around from his bending position. "Certainly—would appreciate your kindness. Guess I am a failure in replacing tires. You see, I am hanging around Colorado for my health. I never realized fully how much health I have coming to me—I get tired with so very little exertion."

Daniel removed his coat and without trouble had the tire adjusted in a very short time. Wiping his hands upon his handkerchief, said:

"I am Daniel Strange of Denver."

The girl in the car held out her hand. "Thank you, so much, Mr. Strange; I have heard a whole lot about you. I am from Texas, am spending the

summer with my uncle in Boulder. I'm sure if you hadn't happened along a searching party would have been out for us—don't you think so, Mr. Wrenn?"

Bob Wrenn gave a half-hearted smile. He didn't like the easy, free manner of the Western people.

"Oh!" exclaimed Daniel, "Wrenn is your name? You forgot to mention it."

"Yes, Bob Wrenn of New York. The doctor sent me here. I had pneumonia last winter—didn't seem to mend very quickly. Since I came here, however, I am gaining a little flesh, but my breath has a way of stopping on me."

"Auntie says she will have to buy another cow, if she gets another recuperating boarder!" volunteered Wrenn's companion.

"Yes, fresh eggs, milk and plenty of Colorado air do the work," Daniel laughingly remarked, climbing into his car. "You must stop in to see me when you're in Denver shopping—my office is in the Childs Building."

"Thank you, Mr. Strange, I may be in most any day. I am on a deal for some mining land, and no doubt will need legal advice."

"My uncle will be so pleased to know I have met you. He is Prof. Bland of the Normal College," cried the young lady, and waving her hand as the car passed them, she smiled a pleased good-bye.

Daniel, with his car gaining speed each moment, headed straight for home.

It was past the dinner hour. The beautiful road, which wound around the mountain and always compelling his admiration, was a stretch of level ground, over which he could speed without sense of care, letting his mind revel in thoughts of two soft brown eyes, a dainty pink and white creature with a wealth of golden hair. He was taking account of the beauties of the girl more accurately than he had ever thought necessary of the many girls he had known. "There certainly is love at first sight—*I am the proof!*" soliloquized Daniel, "but what's her name?"

CHAPTER IV

Betty Bland kept up her diverting chatter as she skillfully drove along the winding mountain roads. She had volunteered to take her companion for a spin through the delightful mountain country. Bob Wrenn of New York came with letters of introduction to Prof. Bland, so he was comfortably installed in the best room of the Bland home, and it was not long before the young man was perfectly at home and greatly enjoyed the simplicity and congeniality of the Blands. It was with a feeling of real pleasure, therefore, that he listened to Mr. Bland announce the expected visit of Betty Bland, a niece whose home was in Texas. She generally spent two or three months of each year with them.

Prof. Bland looked up from the letter he was reading. "Betty will be here tomorrow or next day. By Jove!" he exclaimed, "she tells me she is driving through in her new car."

Mrs. Bland, who was peeling apples for the pies she was noted for baking here evinced alarm. "My! My! Another wild idea—I declare, your

brother Tom is spoiling that girl. He thinks she can do *anything*! I suppose the next thing we hear he will be turning the ranch over to her. Seems to me she does just as she pleases and has all she wants"—drawing a long breath—"I do hope it won't ruin her, for she is a mighty fine girl and I am lonely when she goes home after her visits here. Seems like a funeral—nothing like having a girl around a place."

Bob Wrenn had laid his book aside and was listening to all that was said of the expected visitor.

"So we are to have a *regular* girl with us—one who drives a car, dances, plays tennis, etc., and can round up a herd of yearlings, rope a steer and call in the boys to as good 'chuck' as any rancher ever set before a crowd of hungry Willies!"

Samuel Bland laughed. "I admit Tom has kinder set store by Betty, but she is A-1 all right."

It was now two weeks since the day Betty arrived. The first few days she was in Boulder convinced Bob that she was all Mr. Bland said and more. She was beautiful to look upon, dainty as a flower, with a voice that made one think of the softly touched strings of a harp, sweetness in every note. He found himself wondering how the small hands could handle a rope, or pots and ket-

ties. The fingers were pointed and the nails beautifully manicured. She had called to him to drive with her. Together they had made a tennis court. Bob was counted a fine player, and Betty enjoyed giving him a real battle. With her popular music she kept the household pulsating to syncopated tunes. The days passed pleasantly, each one seeming happier than the other. Nothing had served to cloud their sky, until the chance meeting on the roadside.

"Seems to me you were a little more than cordial to Strange."

"Seems to me you were not even polite," she retorted quickly. "Why, you didn't even say 'thank you.' And goodness only knows what we would have done had he passed us by as motorists do in the East. Little they care if you have lost a wheel or an engine."

Bob Wrenn flushed at the thrust he felt he deserved. "Oh," he ventured, "you have motored over our lovely country?"

"A little," she told him, and speeding up a bit, she gave greater care to the wheel, though now and then she called attention to the scenery, breaking the silence that threatened to fall upon them.

"We will get the mail," at last she told him.

"Auntie Bland must have her Denver paper. She regulates her life according to the advice she finds therein."

Bob got the mail and a box of candy. Pulling her hat down tight, Betty announced: "Now, *Mr. Bob*, hold on—I am going to give you a ride—a real thriller!"

With her foot she opened up and was off. Mr. Bland on his front porch saw them coming around the hill. He called to his wife. "Betty is coming at full tilt," he cried in alarm, "breaking all speed limits. What on earth is to become of that girl?"

"Samuel, you must speak to her. It would be dreadful to have that car turn over—or some accident happen! Scares me to death to think of it!"

Seeing the scared look on his wife's face, he quieted her with the assurance that Betty drove with a steady hand and knew what she was about.

The girl, with her eyes set steadily before her, stopped the car directly in front of the gate. "Come on, Uncle Samuel, let me give you a breath of this wonderful air! Won't be gone long—we'll be back by the time supper is ready! Come on, Uncle!"

"Here, Mr. Bob," to Wrenn, "you take the mail in—and these things to Auntie. Tell her we will be back in 15 minutes!"

Never had Bob Wrenn taken orders of anyone, but this imperious Betty had a way of commanding him and he delightedly did her bidding. He never once thought how strange it was for him to do what Betty told him to do—he seemed to forget that he was the Bob Wrenn whom society girls at home patronized and angling mamas sought out to lead their debutante daughters' cotillions. He really found a relief in the natural joy of living.

Loaded with bundles and the mail, he appeared at the kitchen door, nodding his head at the fast disappearing car.

"They have gone for a joy-ride—be back by the time dinner—I mean supper—is ready, or on the table," he told Mrs. Bland.

"All right—they will be here pretty quick, then," declared that kindly housewife, pleasantly.

Bob deposited the bundles, then went to his room, meantime mentally ruminating on what Betty had said of him—"he was not even polite!" No one ever dared to criticise his manner. "Maybe I was somewhat peeved," he thought. "Gee! A tough job trying to get a tire on and your heart going like a sledge hammer. If I ever see Strange again, I'll certainly apologize."

He heard the happy laughter as Betty was teasing her Uncle. "Auntie, he is worse than you are for nerves—he held on with both hands. I'd like to see him take a ride with that Daniel Strange—that roadster of his would leave my Cole so far behind we wouldn't know we were moving!"

She entered into a full account of their blown-out tire and of how Mr. Strange had come to their relief.

"You men go to the porch to smoke—I'll help Auntie do up the dishes and we will join you later."

As soon as she was alone with Mrs. Bland, she turned the conversation to the afternoon and the accident.

"Oh, Auntie, Mr. Strange is such a splendid looking chap, and the way he put that tire on—didn't take him five minutes!"

"I guess, Betty, he is the young lawyer of Denver the papers so often speak of. I am sure he is to speak at the club meeting here for the Child's Welfare League. You know Colorado is known all over the country for the excellent laws in regard to delinquent children. Most all the rising young men have taken up the subject, and this young Daniel Strange seems to be the man of the

hour. Go get the paper—it is on my desk. Let's see just what it does say."

Betty fairly flew up the stairs. Why should she be excited? This man had only spoken a few commonplace words to her, yet her heart beat and hands trembled while she listened to Mrs. Bland read the article aloud:

"Daniel Strange, a rising young lawyer of Denver, will address the Boulder Club on child welfare. He has studied the subject and put into practical use much knowledge gained by hunting out individual cases. He is a strong advocate of probationary sentence; that is, giving children the chance to reform through kindness and right surroundings. He proposes to set forth many reasons why a child can be led into either life. Many a young culprit, with only one offense, being placed among boys of numerous delinquencies, naturally feels his disgrace and thinks he is the same sort, and would, if taken by a kind hand and led into better thoughts, develop into something stronger than a tool for bad companions. 'As the twig is bent, so it grows.' A child's life is a twig from its birth until it arrives at the age of discretion.

"Few *first* crimes are committed by boys or girls over their majority," the statement continued. "Crime is a thing that has a small beginning and is allowed to gradually fasten itself upon one—through the shame of being a criminal and shunned as such. If a parent threw a child from him for his misdemeanors, how many families would survive? So it is with the State—the delinquent children belong to the State, and it is the duty of every citizen to help them grow into useful citizens."

"As Mrs. Bland finished the article Betty's cheeks were aflame. "Oh! Auntie can't we go to hear him speak? Wouldn't you love to?"

"Certainly, my dear child, we will. Maybe your Uncle will have him for dinner. He often entertains the speakers who come here, especially in the Summertime, when all the hotels and boarding houses are full."

When the dishes were all put away, Betty and Mrs. Bland joined the two men on the porch. Bob, sitting in the swing, made room for Betty.

"Auntie," said she, suggestively, "there is plenty of room for you."

Mr. Bland, with his feet resting upon the railing, detailed numerous stories of the early days,

pertaining to the development of the mineral industry, the primitive machinery first in use, how arduous was the task of mining, etc. The listeners were silent, Betty, busy with thoughts of the young lawyer, hoping he would accept the invitation she felt sure her uncle would extend, and wondering if he would be as nice as he had been when offering assistance. Maybe he would be very dignified and important—most successful young men thoroughly approve of themselves.

Bob Wrenn, making up his mind Betty was the girl for him, trailed off into dreams of happiness, such as men of wealth and position are capable of. Mr. Bland, having made a statement he thought needed full corroboration, waited momentarily for some evidence of attention on the part of his listeners, but receiving none, turned on them with the observation, "Seems to me I am doing a monologue—I am having neither interruption nor attention. Think I will go to bed!" And, placing his chair against the wall, "Now don't you young folks sit up too late. 'Early to bed and early to rise'—never was a better rule to live by."

As soon as Wrenn and Betty were alone, he began to say hurriedly: "Say, girl, you have played the very dickens with my heart. I don't

seem to get it to beat right! By Gad! I believe I am jealous of that fellow Strange. Won't you promise to try to—(placing his arm around the girl, drawing her close to him)—think more of me! Come, Betty, give me a kiss—I'm simply crazy about you!"

As quick as thought she bounded from the swing. "Now look here, Mr. Wrenn, you must not try any of those city tricks on me. I am going in!" she declared, indignantly.

"Oh, Betty, don't—I swear I mean every word. Come, sit down. I will not touch you, but I must tell you all there is in my heart."

As she stood looking down at him, Bob Wrenn wanted this girl more than he had ever wanted anything in his life.

"Listen to me, Betty, won't you try to care for me—give me a chance, please? I know I have never had a serious, worth while thought, everything has come my way without effort. I have money and all that young men crave—but, Betty, be my wife! Let me regain my health here with the dream of you!"

Seeing that the man was serious, noting the panting breath, the soft eyes of Betty lingered a moment over him.

"No, Bob," gently, "we will be just *pals*, good friends. I couldn't promise anything more."

"Why? Why?" came quickly from the lips of the agitated man.

"I don't know why, Bob. I only know a girl's heart must tell her when her mate has come. Good-night, Bob. It is growing late—I must go in."

She left him wondering if girls always knew their own minds.

The hacking cough that dwellers in Colorado are not slow to recognize, came floating through the night, and Betty knew Bob Wrenn was still on the porch. "Poor fellow," she thought, "I do hope it is not too late for this climate to help him."

CHAPTER V

Betty awoke with the sun pouring into the room. She heard the old hens clucking to their broods, as they triumphantly drew their chicks' attention to a worm or some morsel of food. Betty hummed a lively air, as she stood before her mirror arranging the golden hair that insisted upon falling in ringlets about her face.

"Oh, I wonder if today he will remember me, and if he will come home with us?" she thought, wistfully.

"Are you going out in your car, Betty? Wish you would drop me off at the club. Am on for a championship this morning."

"Well, Bob, I do hope you are the winner. Hadn't intended to go out, but get your things together—I will run you over. Wish I could stay to see the match, but I must help Auntie—she is entertaining to-night and we are going to the Woman's Club this afternoon."

"Oh! No doubt you are much interested in Suffrage?" Wrenn said, sarcastically.

"Well; yes and no. Our State has not yet been granted suffrage. It is coming, but I am interested in the welfare of children whose lot in life is not cast in pleasant places—children of cruel, unkind parents, the children of criminals, brought up without kindness, without the ideals of right, sent from bad to worse by circumstances over which they have no power. I think it every woman's duty to study the question, to be able to help, or suggest a remedy that may help. It is with pleasure and interest that I listen to men who are striving to help unfortunates and making the whole world turn to Colorado to see how they deal with their delinquents. Of course, you know, Daniel Strange is to be one of the speakers today. Auntie read me an article he had written. For one so young he seems to have gotten very close to the welfare of children. Won't you join Auntie and me? We would be so glad to have you. Uncle Bland is one of the committee. He will be there early. We are to lunch with them at the Boulder."

With a bitter attempt at a smile and a careless shrug, Bob remarked, slowly, "Oh! I see *now* why you are so interested in the poor waifs. I always find behind any sudden reformatory activity there

is always a personal reason. No," he added, "I guess I will stay here and read. I hear plenty of that stuff in New York. My charity list is long. I help Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Animals, and numerous things—you may see the list when my agent sends it to me to sign."

Betty drew herself up proudly. "So, it is only your *money* you give—you never interest yourself in any of the problems of better conditions for those less fortunate? You have not had time? Well, that may be true—I know Broadway and the bright lights do take a lot of time!"

The biting sarcasm of the last remark cut deep into Bob's selfish nature—more than he wished to acknowledge, but with a quick nervous laugh he retorted: "What a good little Suffragette you will make! I do hope your dear Texas will get in line—if it does, I am coming all the way to hear Betty Bland speak. Gee! But you will look good on a soap box telling the crowd, 'how we did it!'"

Betty didn't reply to the flippant Bob, but tilted her pretty nose, and left him wondering why girls always think they know so much. Reaching home, she tied her apron around her and joined Auntie Bland in the kitchen, there to chatter and help with the work. Auntie Bland listened to the ac-

count of the set-to with Bob. Seeing that the girl was hurt, she said, "Well, honey, you know the worst thing in the world for young folks is too much money and a guardian—they've just kinder turn 'em loose with more money than brains. Nearly all children should have the hand of father or mother to help 'em. Poor Bob has an indulgent Uncle, so we mustn't blame him if he is a little different—we must try to show him how much good there is in him and how much good he can do."

The hacking cough floated in. "Now there! Poor boy, I'm afraid he is in for a bad spell. Take this out to him"—pouring a glass of her home-made cough syrup—"there, you run along and get dressed. Oh! yes, honey, do dust the front room!"

The telephone jingled. Betty ran quickly to answer it, feeling sure Uncle Samuel was calling to say that Daniel Strange had really accepted the invitation to supper.

"Yes! Uncle Bland, that's fine—will tell Auntie and we will be down early. Oh no, we will not keep you waiting. Good-bye!" she cried as she rang off and hastened to Auntie Bland, who stood waiting with glass in hand.

"All right, take this to Bob and then get dressed. It doesn't take me any time—you know girls must primp!"

With the cough syrup and a glass of water in hand, Betty went out to Bob, who rested in the sun.

"We heard you coughing, and Auntie said to bring this to you right away." And then, noting the wry expression on Wrenn's face, she added, mischievously: "Oh, we know how men hate cough syrup, but this is fine—I just dote on it!"

The wistful expression in the boy's face touched the sympathetic Betty as he thanked her, saying, "Awfully good of you and Mrs. Bland, but don't worry about me—I'll be all right soon."

"Of course, you'll be all right, but little bad boys must be helped to be all right," she replied, with simulated sageness, and with a toss of the golden curls she bounded up the stairs to her own room.

She carefully selected the dress she liked best, a dark blue, soft, filmy thing and simply made. The clinging material brought out the curves in her shapely figure, the lacy yoke veiled but failed to hide, the snowy whiteness of bust and shoulders. A large blue hat, covered with field flowers, made

the gold of her hair and the brown of her eyes more wonderful than ever. The long black lashes above her damask cheek enhanced the glory of her velvety skin. With carefully surveying glances, Betty stood before her mirror. The smile of happiness and expectation there reflected pleased her. A song burst from her happy heart and gladly she went down to join Auntie Bland. Entering the car, Betty drew on her gloves and took the wheel, whizzing by the houses and parks without a word.

In front of the Boulder, Uncle Bland was waiting. "Just on time, must have been something to *specially* hurry you Betty—hey?" With laughing banter they enjoyed luncheon at the hotel. Going over to the City Hall, they entered the well-filled room. Daniel Strange was one in the group that stood talking upon the rostrum, but Betty saw only *his* face, the forms of those about him but serving as a background for the splendid figure standing among them in graceful ease.

For a woman's complex reason, Betty was glad she had taken unusual care to look her best. She was pleased at the white gleam of her arms and shoulders, which accented the waves of her red-gold hair. Would *he* recognize her? Suddenly a

wave of misgiving assailed her. Never before had Betty counted on her beauty as a means of attracting the opposite sex, nor had she indeed ever desired the admiration of any man. Quietly now she sat trying, to listen attentively to the different ideas advanced by Boulder's most influential women upon the subject nearest their hearts—"Children"—but, try as she would, Betty could not become really interested.

At last, however, our heroine was abruptly aroused from an attitude of passive attention when Mrs. Brown, the acknowledged leader of advanced woman's work, in a few well chosen words introduced Mr. Daniel Strange of Denver, the guest of the Woman's Club. He would *not* make a speech, she told her auditors, but would talk to them of what he had seen accomplished in the Juvenile Court of Denver for the boys and girls of that city. Some he knew personally, said Mrs. Brown, had been brought before the Court for misdemeanors and crimes who now, under the present system of dealing with unfortunate children, were developing into useful citizens.

"I feel sure all who are gathered here will listen with great interest to Mr. Strange," vouchsafed Mrs. Brown, in closing her brief introductory talk.

And then, to Betty's very great pleasure, Mr. Strange slowly arose from his chair, and stood with one hand resting upon the desk, the other behind him. For a moment in dignified silence his eyes traveled the length and breadth of the room, as if taking mental measurement of his audience. Betty flushed as she caught a pleased look of recognition. And the answering look which Betty gave seemed to proceed from out her very soul.

In delighted ecstasy she listened to the well modulated voice, never rising above a conversational tone, as convincingly he told his hearers how the children were brought into Court; how the probation officers looked after them; of the institutions and homes where they were taught to obey the laws of God and man, and how in due time most of them became useful, God-fearing, God-loving men and women—instead of criminals.

As he warmed to his subject, his expressive eyes grew bright with enthusiasm. He was frequently interrupted by the generous applause accorded him. In the closing of his talk he paid a glowing tribute to men and women who interested themselves in the poor children.

"The majority of cases are among the foreign element," he said. "In their ignorance they

neglect their children. Before we shall see the cruelty of parental negligence wiped out, there must be a *law* to hold parents responsible for crimes of children under age, a governing board to look into the capabilities of family heads—measure their earning capacity, investigate their home surroundings and mode of life.

“My friends,” urged the forceful speaker, “I stand before you now to ask you to think this matter over seriously—a change must come! The great book has told us the ‘sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.’ So we must compel the father and the mother to give account of their stewardship when their children are called delinquent.”

Flushed with excitement—for the words of Daniel Strange struck deep into the hearts of his listeners—men and women gathered about him, anxious to clasp the hand of so honest an advocate of their cause.

Mrs. Bland and Betty chatted with friends on their way out of the hall, and having reached their car, they waited for Uncle Bland and Mr. Strange, whom they saw slowly making their way toward them.

"Here we are at last," cried Uncle Samuel jovially, as the two men approached the car. "Thought I was never going to get this young man away from the admiring crowd, didn't you? Well, he told them just what they were anxious to hear. Mr. Strange, my wife—no need to introduce Betty, of course, she has told me of your kindness and the help you gave her when you found poor Bob trying to replace a tire."

Cordially shaking hands with the ladies, Mr. Strange stood with hat in hand. "Yes," said he, "I was fortunate enough to choose the *long* road home that afternoon, so came upon the disabled car just at the right time. However," he added, significantly, "I didn't learn the young lady's name."

"Betty Bland—my niece, from Texas, "vouchsafed Uncle Samuel, getting into the seat beside his wife. "Mr. Strange, you may sit with the chauffeur. I tell you, she is some *driver*, too. I have to hang on with both hands to keep my seat, but"—and he shook a warning finger at Betty—"you needn't try to put dust in the eyes of everybody on the road, even if I am bragging on you. Remember how scary Auntie is."

Laughing merrily at his joking remarks, Betty turned around—"All ready?" she called, and Mr. Bland gave the signal to go.

The girl slowly drove along the beautiful road, pointing out to Strange the places of interest and calling attention to the beauties of nature to be seen all about them. Daniel Strange thought he had never seen a girl half so beautiful. He called to mind girls of his college days that had been voted lovely, but none of them seemed to equal the creature by his side, who so deftly threaded her way through the traffic of the village. At last, having reached the smooth winding road of the country, Betty gave the engine plenty of gas. Away they whirled, forty miles an hour. "There is our place—up on the hill," she announced. "We climb the hill in three laps, before we get to it."

At the gate, Bob Wrenn came to meet them, welcoming Daniel cordially. "Glad to see you, Mr. Strange," said he.

Betty drove around to the garage, and then, coming in the back way, she hastened to her room to make a judicious application of talcum to her pretty nose. "I don't believe I said three intelligent things all the way home," she confided to herself. Giving her hair a few final caressing

strokes, she surveyed herself in the mirror, whispering chidingly to her pretty image: "There, Betty Bland, your heart has gone out of your keeping. Cupid made good his aim that time. I think he has crippled you for life," and with another dab at her nose she went down to join the rest of them on the porch.

Bob and Daniel were in an argument, and she listened attentively wondering if he (Strange) would speak as convincingly as he had in the club meeting.

With a quiet, dignified manner, bereft of all egotism, he showed Bob Wrenn he was entirely in error in his judgment.

"Uncle Bland says for us to come right in to supper," announced Betty, whereupon all repaired to Mrs. Bland's cosily inviting dining room, where a meal, prepared with consummate housewifely skill and thought was greatly enjoyed. After supper wit and repartee made the time quickly pass, and it was near the midnight hour when Daniel bid his host good-night.

"Auntie," suggested Betty, "it is a wonderful night—suppose we drive Mr. Strange to his hotel! I promise not to exceed the speed law—20 miles an hour will be the very fastest. And I'll give all

the joy-riders the road," she roguishly added.

Mr. Bland heartily agreed, admonishing his hearers not to worry about Betty driving—"She runs her old Dad all over the ranch night or day!"

"Go get your wraps—I will bring your car around for you," offered Bob.

"I put my wraps in the back hall—I was almost sure Auntie and I would have this pleasure," acknowledged our forehanded little heroine.

"Now, young folks, take the front seat—I'm going to have a real quiet, enjoyable time back here!" declared Uncle Samuel as he sank into the cushions.

The crescent of the young moon hung low in the eastern sky, the night the kind that breathes of nature. Betty felt Daniel's admiring eyes upon her. She felt the thrill of his personality. His nature pulsed with tender longing—to be human is not a crime, but a virtue. "My wonder girl," he was saying to himself. Ere he realized, he was telling Betty all about himself, his beautiful mother—as far back as he could remember; the intimate things of his childhood. His tongue seemed to roll with delicious stories of boyish pranks. She in turn told of her Dad, the most wonderful and best in all the world!

"Mother died when I was born, so Dad has been father and mother to me. Sometimes I am afraid I am a Tom-boy, for Dad makes a real pal of me. I think the three years I spent in New York in school were the most miserable years of my life—I so missed the *boys!*"

"The boys?" quickly asked Daniel.

"Yes," she admitted, "the cowboys. I knew every one of them by name. You see, I help Dad a lot. He says I make a full hand. And I keep house for him, I go to town for the mail and do errands. When help is scarce I can do most anything—it saves him a lot of worry."

Daniel Strange listened to Betty as she rattled on of the ranch life. Surprised at her knowledge of life in general, he wondered if she were a *woman* in toy size. The moon was now slowly going down behind the mountains. Auntie Bland leaned forward to say, "I think we had better turn around," as the lights of Boulder began to loom up in the distance. A hushed quiet fell over them, both realizing they must soon say good-bye.

A new understanding mysteriously found birth in Betty's heart, she was sure the good-bye wouldn't be for long. A clutch of fear, mingled with the joy that flooded her soul, made her

tremble as Daniel held her hand tightly in his at parting.

Standing with bared head, he watched the car pass out of sight. There comes a time in every man's life when duty is not enough, he must find that perfect sympathy and understanding which is love. The delicate lilting of the pipes of Pan called out to him across the centuries—he knew that Betty and he had come together with that suddenness and certainty that is a part of true love. Cupid has many romantic thoroughfares, but the sweetest is the road upon which he comes swiftly and suddenly, with a passionate sweetness that blinds the senses and sets the heart a-quiver with joy. There is a sense of exquisite half-pain at the first awakening of a great love. Sometimes it is like the rending of a veil—a sudden flash of revealing light, in which for a tragic instant it is given us at the very beginning to see also the end.

Daniel Strange sat by his window far into the night, thinking of Betty. “My wonder girl,” he murmured, “I met your soul, dear, as forth it beamed from your blue eyes!”

He renewed the promise to keep himself pure and clean for the woman who would some day shed the radiance of a priceless love over his life.

“My wonder girl!” he breathed, ecstatically. “all the beauty of your body made for love, cries out to me—all the beauty of your soul, made for sacrifice, draws me to you. I will make myself worthy of your love, I will win you, and together we shall go up, up to Paradisial heights of happiness. Oh, my love!”

CHAPTER VI

As the automobile in which we rode approached the corner of 46th Street, New York, the man slowed down to permit a car to cross the avenue in front of us. "There is Mr. Wrenn, now," said I, touching the arm of Lad Lane, whom I was giving a ride as far as his office. "Don't think his companion recognized us," I added, as I threw in the clutch and the car started forward.

"Have you heard of Wrenn's latest flirtation?" asked Lane. "My wife brings it home from the auction table."

"Yes," I hazarded, "that is, I suppose you mean Aldene, the Garden dancer?"

"Indeed not, sir," replied Lane. "She is a charming young widow. Oh, no," he hastily added, "not *grass*! Her husband had a real funeral with flowers and everything. She wore becoming black the fashionable length of time, and then, suddenly re-appearing, men fell over themselves with their attentions. Now, also, Wrenn rushes out of his office every afternoon, drops into some of the joy-palaces for a cup of tea and a

fox-trot with the golden haired damsel. Seems to me he is pretty hard hit." I swung the car around, drew up in front of the building where Lane had his office.

"Good-bye, old chap; thanks for the lift. Come in to see me some time."

"So long, I will."

I hated to hear Lane talk of Wrenn so. For several years, Robert Wrenn and I had been on very friendly terms. We met frequently at the club and social functions. I had met Mr. Wrenn many times and have been entertained in the palatial home. Always extremely polite to each other, I had scented a rupture. Unhappiness with a deep undercurrent of rebellion would soon burst forth. So closely had he guarded his affairs that I was deeply grieved and astounded that the women of his wife's set were openly discussing him. I could not bring myself to believe that Robert Wrenn could enter into the double dealing with women so common in this pulsating New York. Anyway, to-night at the Gebhardt reception, I will see what I can see. Lane didn't say "the charming widow" was Fanny Gebhardt, but her golden hair and millions point that way.

I wonder if the stately Mrs. Wrenn is averse to a little admiration and a quiet flirtation now that Robert is so open with his affairs. She may think "sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose."

The splendid home of Mrs. Gebhardt was ablaze with lights. In the covered carriage-way, one could see the Four Hundred wrapped in costly furs, men whose silk hats shone under the electric lights, helping their ladies from cars, liveried chauffeurs and footmen standing at attention. The slam of the crest emblazoned door proclaimed wealth and prosperity.

Inside the spacious halls stood Fanny Gebhardt, welcoming her guests, as they came down the marble stair. So ideally had her home been built for entertaining and sumptuous receptions. Guests entered from the carriage entrance, went upstairs to cloak-rooms, making a successful entrance down the gorgeously lighted stairway that wound in old colonial style three stories.

Many debutantes owed their success in society to the *grace* with which they descended Mrs. Gebhardt's *marble stairs*. Fanny Gebhardt, the widow of the late Timothy Gebhardt from out the West—his money came over night, in copper—with untold wealth, came the desire to live in New

York and the great dream of many western men, to be a power in Wall Street. After a year spent flitting about among the gay places where money and wine flow freely, "Tim" (as he was known) made up his mind that a married life would suit him. He fully realized what an asset a beautiful wife would be. He had bought everything else in life, why not a wife? All he asked of her would be a square deal, and to out-shine any other women.

With this plan firmly in his mind, he set about to find "his woman." Several weeks were spent in seriously looking over the beauties along the great white way. Tim sized them up pro and con, finally deciding upon a golden haired goddess, who seemed more quiet than her companions, whose clothes hadn't the stamp of exclusive tailors, no jewels, and the furs she wore were plain, inexpensive, yet her beauty and aristocratic bearing marked her in all the gathering. Fanny was the most sought beauty in the fashionable beauty show. It was soon whispered along that "Tim" was *hard hit*, and no surprise was felt when the morning paper announced a "quiet wedding."

Fanny made up her mind to be a good wife and shoulder her part of the contract. No great

demonstrations of great love were indulged in by either. A perfect understanding was between them.

Five years of satisfaction in regard to the abundance of his wealth, the richness of his wife's apparel and the fortune spent for her jewels, passed happily for "Tim." He lived and luxuriated in thoughts of *Fanny*, who was conceded the most gorgeously gowned woman on the opening of "The Metropolitan" and the most beautiful woman in New York. Her portrait has been painted by society's pet artist, and there seemed nothing more to desire. It was with a shock his friends read of his sudden death—a heart attack, brought on by lack of exercise, the ease of luxury, eating, drinking and smoking. The newspapers devoted a half page to his picture and head lines of the wealth acquired in a few years.

To-night "Tim" Gebhardt's widow would make her re-entrance into society, her first formal affair since her husband's death. Already were the tongues wagging—her wealth, her next husband, etc. She stood a regal figure, tall, perfectly formed, her bare shoulders gleamed like Italian marble, her hair piled in a coil of glowing gold, supported by a tiara of emeralds and diamonds,

one of the princely gifts bestowed upon her by her late husband, and the long chain of the same wonderful stones sparkled upon her breast.

For each guest she seemed to have an individual greeting. Fanny Gebhardt had been recognized as an ideal hostess.

A distinguished looking couple were slowly coming down the stair. All society recognized Robert Wrenn and his stately wife. None could remember ever having seen her here. The two, whose future was tottering, whose lives were linked, yet their paths were along such different routes, so well versed in social etiquette were they, that even intimate friends doubted the fast growing clouds in their horizon.

After the hostess had said a few cordial words in welcome, Mrs. Wrenn joined a group of friends that had taken special notice of her entrance as they stood admiring a celebrated painting. Robert from the lower step stood looking down upon the loveliness he adored.

"You see you have conquered," he almost hissed under his breath. "I have brought my wife here into your home. When shall I claim my reward?"

Before the question could be answered, other guests claimed Mrs. Gebhardt's attention.

Robert Wrenn looked much the same as he did 20 years ago. His hair was gray at the temples and well sprinkled, and his waist line was not quite so perceptible. Years had turned the "handsome chap" into an elegant, dignified man of affairs. The whisper of domestic unrest in the Wrenn household had lately been publicly discussed. Numerous harmless flirtations had been accredited to the master of the house, but only in the last two years had open intrigue been winked at.

"The Garden dancer" had spent very lavishly, and her jewels and gowns were envied by Broadway stars. Of late, he had not been seen with her set. There must be someone else? Whispers of the latest infatuation were being gradually breathed around.

The rich Mrs. Gebhardt—idle gossip, many thought, but a woman who is beautiful, rich and a widow, can very easily be singled out as the discordant note in an already *crashing home* symphony.

Mrs. Robert Wrenn, secure in the assurance of her Knickerbocker blood, wealth and social position, had refused to accept the *new rich*, as she classed all who had made money quickly and were

not in the family blue-book; so the Gebhardts had come very decidedly under her ban. Of late "many shafts at random sent" had taken lodgment in her proud soul. She made a point not to accept invitations where she would meet Mrs. Gebhardt. It was with acknowledged annoyance she accepted the invitation to-night.

"Why is it you insist that I accept. I have never done so, you always do."

With a casual glance at his wife, Wrenn spoke quietly, but determinedly:

"Simply because I wish you to be sensible. I am tired of explaining why you do not. You have my reason now, and I will most assuredly expect you to attend this affair."

The perverseness of woman was in Mrs. Wrenn's reply.

"The Timothy Gebhardts for several years have been known for the lavishness of their entertainments. You have never before expressed any desire that *I* should patronize the western money market. Why this particular party, Robert?"

"I am tired of having my wife a snob, and it seems to me you are going too far with your idea of *family*. In this hustling democratic age I am

sorry, Florence, but we are standing on the edge of a domestic precipice—a slight move either way is likely to topple us over. This cold, abused attitude of yours is getting on my nerves. Why did you marry me if you didn't love me? I was mad enough to think you did, and was willing to give up the old life, settle down as a family man, why I even dreamed of my children, my boys and girls. Every man that is a man desires to see his name from one generation to another. No sooner were the meaningless words spoken, than my dreams were shattered. Do you call these cold, staring walls home? Your unresponsive passionless lips love? God, you are like nothing so much as a marble statue. Your clubs and limousines fill your life. I tell you I must be with people who have and feel warm blood in their veins, who pulsate with nature. From now on we accept as our friends people who live and breathe. Open the windows, let in God's fresh air, let the sun pour through this dismal gloom, bring in a few people who are glad to be alive, and stop associating with your dead ancestors.

"No wonder Bob called this place the morgue.

"By-the-by, a letter from him says he thinks more than likely he may spend the Winter in

Denver, likes it there and is improving."

Mrs. Wrenn received the news of Bob's health with as little interest as possible to display. Her love of luxury and ease had been so assiduously cultivated that she never allowed herself to become ruffled or even upset. She paid little attention to her husband, and was somewhat surprised at this morning's scene. It was really too much exertion to argue. With a wave of her jeweled hand and a smile hard to understand, she closed the question by a dignified bearing, saying:

"If you command, I obey. Mrs. Gebhardt shall have the pleasure of meeting Robert Wrenn's wife under her own roof," and swept from the room in imperious disgust.

When scandals are taking shape in the circle of the rich and socially prominent, many quiet glances, raising of eyebrows with hidden meaning, confirmation more deadly than open words are indulged in, and friend and foe ready for battle.

The orchestra poured forth in a popular fox-trot. Robert Wrenn held out his arms. Mrs. Gebhardt had swept out upon the floor for the first dance. Many smiles and looks of *I wonder if it is true?* were telegraphed around the room.

Mr. Lane was enjoying his first dance to the utmost with the wife of his friend Robert Wrenn, but to all of his happy conversation he could get little response.


It was only the afternoon before that Wrenn had lost control of himself and told Fanny Gebhardt how unhappy he was, and how she had brought brightness into his life. For years he had thought her wonderful, he respected her loyalty to him. Now, now, it was all different. To-night the nearness of her gave him assurance. He held her firm to his heart.

"Oh, my dear, it must end. I can't give you up. I am going to tell her everything."

He was on a new plane, marvelous joy was filling his whole being. The dance was over. Others claimed her. He watched with bated breath the object of this mad delirium dispense hospitality with the ease and grace of women who were blue blooded from the most exclusive line of ancestry.

The hours had fled quickly. "Good night," with all the meaningless pretty speeches were being indulged in. The hostess smiled upon all alike.

Fanny Gebhardt slowly ascended to her boudoir, throwing herself down upon the chaise-longue. She lighted a perfumed cigarette.



" 'Tis a long lane that does not turn. You, Robert Wrenn, will pay, pay with heartaches, with misery, 'an eye for an eye.' I have sworn to bring you to the dust. All these years, one thought has burned within me. Now I am free. I will make you cringe in the dust."

Opening a secret drawer in her desk, she took a faded picture of a young girl, the card-board yellow with age. Fanny gazed lovingly upon it and with sobs she couldn't control whispered:

"Dora, dear one, 'Little Sis' will avenge your wrongs. Oh! dear, if you could only speak, come from the yesterday, just to know if you live. Where are you, dear? Is there no way to find you? Surely God will answer my prayer."

When Dora Temple left her southern home to make the world recognize in her an artist entitled to fame, she, like countless thousands, felt the lights of New York beckoning, the one place of beginning and ending all artistic dreams. For several years her letters went regularly to her family, then suddenly stopped. Weeks and months went into years with no news. The money she had sent at first to help was greatly missed.

Little sister, only five when Dora left, remembered the dolls and toys and the pretty dresses

that came so often and then stopped. As she grew up, her beauty was marveled at. She was regarded a spiritual child, so pronounced were her perfect features. At 16 she was left alone to battle for her livelihood. New York, as of old, beckoned compellingly, invitingly, hinting of adventure. A small voice she could not keep silent was whispering, "Dora."

There in that seething mass of humanity you may find some trace of her. *Go, go, go.*

Armed with the old address in Washington Square, Fanny found quarters in the lower part of the city. It was not hard for her to get employment. Artists were seeking models. After a short time, she changed her name to Frances Dore. It sounded more like the colony, for as a model she was busy from morning till night. She was the fashion.

It was not long before she knew most of the frequenters of the Bohemian village, the 5 o'clock studio teas and table d'hote dinners. There were many names with which she was familiar that were leaders in the exclusive and smart set.

At a masque ball she found herself dancing with Robert Wrenn.

Most of the evening, as they sat over refreshments he inquired: "Are you a new addition to the wondrous beauties to be found on Fourteenth Street? I have never met you before, yet I feel something familiar in your voice. Gad! girl, you make me feel that the grave had opened, that time had turned the old clock back and Dora, my old pal, is back here right in the old place."

With great difficulty the girl controlled herself. Dora—Dora who? Dora Temple, a beauty, an artist, too real to be human, she didn't understand temperament, believed in marriage and all of that.

With the cunning of an old sleuth, gradually she gained her point—the story of Dora Temple and an invitation to see a picture painted by a girl still in her teens, "Nature," promised fame to Dora.

His voice trailed off.

"Seems to me that with her talent, ambition would have crowned and mastered every impulse, but love crept in and swept her off her feet." Now you know why Fanny Gebhardt was using all her energy and power to fascinate Robert Wrenn. The marriage with millions had made things easier, now they would be on an equal footing,—guests in the same houses,—frequent the same

places of amusement—it would be an open battle.

To-night she had felt the triumph of power. She had compelled Robert Wrenn to bring his wife to her reception. To-morrow she would meet him, he would do her bidding. He would free himself by divorce, and Fanny Gebhardt laughed aloud, walking the floor in nervous frenzy. She could hardly wait for the revenge that had grown to obsession.

“I will laugh at him in his misery. I will reveal myself, my true self—Fanny Temple. Vengeance in a woman waits long, but she hits hard and sure, a home broken, a life ruined, what matter? Revenge is sweet.”

CHAPTER VII

"Your bath is waiting," the maid announced.

Fanny Gebhardt sat up in bed, rubbing her eyes, the pink brocade hanging around the antique bed with its wonderful coverings of lace and silk, formed a fit setting for her radiant beauty. Her maid threw the soft negligee about her and slipped the mules on her dainty feet.

"Lay out my brown suit; I will wear the mink furs today. I shall need James at 12:30."

After the bath and cold shower, Fanny placed herself in the hands of her capable Rose who had served her faithfully for years. Aside from the generous salary that Rose appreciated, she was very fond of her mistress, taking genuine pleasure in arranging her hair in the latest and most becoming styles. She admired the costly gowns, always deciding *which* was the most becoming. Today her mistress was seemingly upset—nervous—so Rose, taking advantage of her long service, ventured to suggest a change in the suit chosen.

"Miss Fanny," said the maid, "I sure do wish you would wear your purple suit, trimmed in the

gray fur; honey, you just don't know how sweet you is in it."

The smiling darky displayed a double row of white teeth, as she smiled her real admiration.

"Well, Rose, if it will please you and you think the purple so becoming, bring out your purple."

The last touches to her toilet, a fashion plate produced no more perfectly gowned woman. Fanny, seated in the closed car, gave James the name of a well known restaurant. Down the avenue the car wound in and out. Many recognized the wealthy widow, smiling a greeting to her.

At 12:30 from the door of one of the exclusive resorts of Broadway Robert Wrenn watched nervously each car as it drew up and deposited its occupants under the striped canopy. His anxiety was hard to conceal. A man-about-town thinks lightly of lunching with pretty women. Today it was different. It was not the cozy stolen hour—it was the big thing in his life, his dull drab life. Fanny loved him. All other ties would be broken. There is no law to compel a man to live with a woman he does not love, no matter what scruples *she* has about divorce.

"My lawyer is already busy with the facts; let him make any kind of settlement he chooses. Just

freedom is all I crave—freedom to wed this wonderful creature of blood and fire.”

His wife had listened attentively while he poured forth the well rehearsed story, his denouncement of her coldness, lack of sympathy and selfishness had brought a smile of derision over her composed features.

There were no new phases of the case, for she had heard it all so many times in the past year. It was with real satisfaction she listened to terms of separation, then absolute divorce to be secured in another state where grounds other than immoral were legal.

“So you wish to spend the rest of your life with one who understands you?” said Mrs. Wrenn. “What would the married man of to-day do without that threadbare *phrase*? Not being understood, seems to be the beginning of the end.”

Calmly rising from her chair, Mrs. Wrenn was a picture of the cultivated woman of the smart set, indifferent to the whims of men.

“You may send your lawyer to Judge Wells; he has full charge of my affairs. I will communicate with him at once. Your man will see that all your belongings are sent to your club, or wherever you choose,” and closing the door gently,

she disappeared.

Robert Wrenn drew a breath of relief.

"Anyway there was no scene," he said. "I hate scenes, tears and all weak unwomanly dramatics."

So here at 12:30 he was impatiently waiting for Fanny to tell her it was over, and they could begin their plans for a life filled with love and happiness.

Snapping his watch for the second time in two minutes, he realized she was ten minutes late.

"She never had been late before," thought Wrenn; "could anything have happened to her? I will call her home and find out if she has left—how long since. Why, how foolish I am."

Just then, glancing toward the door, she was entering with several other women, her beauty standing out conspicuously, perfectly gowned, her purple suit from the most exclusive tailor. The richness of the gray furs, with hat edged with same, brought gold of her hair and the blue of her eyes in wonderful contrast; gold, blue and gray, mingled with the gorgeous purple. Her cheeks, free of rouge, were pink and soft with the chill of the winter frost.

Hurrying to meet her, Wrenn whispered anxiously:

"I thought you would never come."

Leading the way to his reserved table in a secluded spot, he seated himself opposite her, his eyes drinking in every detail of her ravishing beauty.

"Waiter, two cocktails—Bronx."

"Thank you," she said; "don't order any for me. I am not drinking a thing now; have made a whole book full of New Year's resolutions."

After draining his glass, he started heatedly into a full account of the morning's affair and its subsequent end. Calmly, as a disinterested party she listened, never interrupting his recital.

At the close with the announcement, "I am putting up at my club," Fanny leaned near him and asked: "Why did you do it?"

The fire in the man's eyes sought hers.

"All these years I have wanted you," said he; "hungered for you. I believed myself strong, I thought I could go on to the end, but when I found that you *cared* I couldn't. A love as big as ours must be its own excuse. I shall never leave you or give you up. I am glad I told her all about it. I couldn't leave without telling her—not your name—but of the great love, the mad desire for freedom. Really, there was nothing else to do.

Oh, she was very nice about it. I think she knew without my telling her. For a year I have wanted to, and my lawyer has the rest of the business in hand. That is over and done with. We cannot have our happiness without a little sorrow. Of course, I hate to cause her unhappiness, but I guess that is all in the game called life."

Reaching over the table, he laid his hand over hers. She let him hold it for a moment. The hand he held was cold and trembling.

"I know just how you feel, dear, you poor little sensitive dear. You are dreading the head lines in the papers. Don't think of it. There will be nothing startling. Mrs. Wrenn is too proud to let her circle of friends and followers sympathize with her. She is guarding her ancestry. Come now, cheer up; let's be happy. Here, waiter," and he ordered wine. "We will drink *our* health, *wealth* and *happiness*. Bad luck to toast with water—wine, sparkling, snappy wine. Fanny, dear, you are more to me than everything in the world. Why, girl, for ten years I have loved you, on and on I have loved through the days and nights, with only our hearts and memories for nourishment. Love like this isn't given every day. I know now you love me, you brave, noble,

little woman. When am I to claim my darling?"

"Wait, wait, come to-morrow," she whispered—at five for tea—just you and I. Then we will talk our plans over. It is so new now. I must think it all out. I must be going now, as I have an engagement with my tailor, and you must never keep his royal highness waiting."

He accompanied her to the waiting car, lifting his hat. To-morrow at five—one more stroke for the revenge that was burning her heart and soul. She almost felt letters of fire upon her forehead. She panted in anger.

"Oh, *Dora*, it is *you* in me he loves, the old love of his youth, revived; the something he finds in me, is you dear—he shall pay."

The automobile slowly threaded its way, and people who noticed the beautiful woman and saw the gracious smiles she gave friends who passed would have found it hard to believe that the one thing in her mind, was the wreck of a human life.

The lights burned low from under their pink shades, the logs on the hearth were blazing, the stage was set. It was the final scene. The clock pointed to five and the silvery chime pealed the hour.

The great car drew up under the *porte-cochere*. The velvet draperies parted. Robert Wrenn entered unannounced. With swift strides he crossed the room. Fanny stood leaning against the low mantle.

"I have not kept you waiting, you see, dear," said Wrenn. "I am impatient for my answer."

She evaded his embrace, but allowed him to kiss her cheek. Like a cat, toying with a mouse, Fanny led him on.

The maid rolled in the tea cart. She placed it between them, with the grace women acquire and men love in serving tea. Fanny poured his cup.

"Oh, dear, to think, ere long we will be so happy together for all time. It seldom comes to a man in his later years to gain such a prize."

The night came on. Fanny moved to a couch, piled the pillows of soft downy satin in comfy confusion.

"Come sit by me," said Fanny, "I want you to tell me all about your first love, Dora—everything. Sometimes I think I am jealous of that old love. Did you try to find her after she closed the studio?"

It was well he could not see the expression in Fanny's face while she listened to him tell of the

four years of infatuation—imaginary love—the mad kind that lead men and women into lives that must leave the sting, more for the woman than the man.

Infatuation is the crime by which the divine and exultant Dora had the courage to grasp what her nature passionately demanded. Freedom for love, which is morality. Fanny sat in silence, in which a human soul renewed its covenant with God. Every instinct of reason, all her sympathy had gone out to Dora and to all women who had undergone suffering caused by man. Wrenn's voice trailed off and he seemed far away.

"A *child!*" Fanny sprung from the couch, almost unable to control herself. "Did you say there was a child? Oh God, and *you* refused to give your child, your son, a name? Wasn't he as much yours as though the High Priest had said the empty words that give to man the right to own a woman? What right has woman—her child—you sent her out into the World to battle for the child, to bear the burden of your animal nature, to slave, half fed, half clothed, while you lived, honored among men, and sought after by women, you branded a young girl with the scarlet letter, and refused to lend your name to your own son,

more legitimate than thousands of children cradled in luxury. You say she loved you, was brave enough to fight for her child—yet you a man, a coward, stood weakly by, let her shoulder the burden of sin *alone!*” With head high, every nerve tense, she turned to the desk, the lights were turned on, the room was ablaze. “Look! Do you know this girl?” thrusting the faded picture toward him. “Dora—Dora, yes Dora, *my sister*, who gave her life and soul to you, who begged for justice and was scorned. For ten years I have known why Dora ceased to write home, and that *you* were the man that ruined her life. I have worked, have used all my powers to fascinate *you*. I have prayed for this hour,” reading his thoughts as though he had spoken. “No, no. I do not know where she is. *She* has had no word in my revenge. I have never seen or heard from Dora since I was a child, when she left home to come to New York to study and make her art mean fame and wealth. For several years her letters came regularly. Then days went into weeks, months and years without any word. It broke my mother’s heart. I think an unseen hand guided me. I wanted more than anything else in the world to find my sister. When I,

like thousands of girls came here, I brought the old address. I wanted to live 'mid the same surroundings, to study every face, every word, trusting in fate to help me. You remember the night of the studio ball? After our masks were removed how often you danced with me, because I reminded you of your "old pal."

The laugh that hysterically broke upon the silence was not pleasant to hear. A desperate gleam in her eyes warned Robert Wrenn to try no defense.

"I knew it would be you who would tell me the story of Dora Temple. I led you on—on, always with one thought in my mind. I steeled my heart against love. I knew some day *you* would sue for my honorable love. It was through me that Timothy Gebhardt cultivated your friendship. You were never out of mind. When your high and mighty wife refused to meet the "new rich" as she designated all those who had not been born with a golden spoon in their mouths, or claimed an old Knickerbocker reprobate as an ancestor, more determined was I that the name of Wrenn should be dragged through the dust. Now, go!"

"Oh, Fanny, don't. Speak to me."

"Go!"

With stooped shoulders, disheveled hair and clammy hands, Robert Wrenn suddenly realized the stars were shining and the wind blowing a gale from the Hudson River. A long time he stood in front of the stone mansion. Suddenly he came to himself, aware of a terrible aching and stinging sensation. How long had he been out in the cold, when did he stop in front of this place and why?

Hailing a passing taxi, he gave the driver his club address, climbing stiffly and dazedly into the cab where he slumped down on the seat trying to realize what had happened. At his club he called for several stiff drinks. In his room he seated himself in front of the grate to wait—for what? He didn't know. Maybe for daylight, maybe for courage to end it all, maybe to pray.

It seemed strange for him to find the morning bright, the blue pushing clouds moving quickly, forming into fantastic figures over the bustling, hustling city. The wind, whistling through the leafless trees, seemed as if some cosmic being were having its fun and laughing at his trouble. The stinging accusation, "You refused to give your child *its name*," rang in his ears.

All day in his office, all around him, every boy, every girl that came in to speak to him or take his

letters, seemed to be figures with burning accusing eyes.

Late in the afternoon he found himself headed for his club, with no particular purpose. Habit was the active power to thrust him forward, in spite of an incoherent sense of repugnance that stirred within him at the very thought of the place, but there he could think, try to find himself. After ordering a brandy and soda, he turned toward a deserted corner of the comfortable lounging room, selected the most inviting arm chair and lighted his cigar. With his head resting upon the soft cushioned back, he surveyed the room. His gloom seemed to increase and a distaste for existence grew. Pure disdain marked his inspection of the well-fed, well-dressed prosperity that lounged in this exclusive club.

All of a sudden he was struck by the certitude that he was sick and longed to be away from the big noisy city, where for him there was no happiness, no love, only misery and disappointment. The feeling that had been born grew until it flared into actual nausea, stirring soul and body.

Throwing his head forward, clenching his hands with quick determination to act definitely—at once—he threw his half-smoked cigar into the

brass receiver, went immediately to his room, giving orders for his bags to be packed at once and saying for his man to await orders to join him.

The train leaving the Grand Central Station at 12:30 for the West had a passenger that felt no fear or thrills at the speed of its monster engine, for the *one* great desire that possessed him was to leave far behind the hateful scenes.

Robert Wrenn had fully decided to go West, to a new country. After a few days in Chicago, making arrangements for funds and writing letters to his business associates, he would lose himself in the great country that spread toward the Pacific. Out there, a man was a man—no past—no future—the *present* was all that concerned him—live and let live. Maybe among the big hearted Westerners he might make new friends, become interested in their mode of living—in time forget.

As the train fairly flew over the shining rails, a new train of thought kept knocking for entrance. He couldn't still the small voice. It grew stronger, until with terror he admitted to himself that all these years he had compelled the errors of his youth to slumber, his conscience had been so guarded with worldly sentinels—nature stood dumb in the background, afraid to speak, now the

weak, low whisper grew to a strong, accusing voice that surmounted its enemy—*your* child. Where is your child? The desire to right a great wrong grew. He sat gazing out of the window at the snow covered ground. He traveled the road to yesterday, resting his head upon his breast, the tears of bitter anguish coursing down his cheeks—a strong man wept and was unashamed.

CHAPTER VIII

The summer had gone swiftly for Betty. She was both pleased and happy that her father had consented for her to spend the winter with Uncle and Antie Bland and had promised to join them at Xmas time. She was reading his letter with the smile auntie adored.

"What does he say, Betty?" came from Uncle Bland.

"Listen, let me read it to you." "My dear *Betty girl*, I am so glad you have had such a happy time with the folks, and have been such a good girl that they are not anxious to send you home. You can stay the winter, for I know how lonesome it is out here when the bad weather sets in. I miss you, but am busy. Have plenty of help. Don't worry about me. Am enclosing check. Of course, Betty has to have some new clothes. Will do my best to get to Colorado by Xmas.

"Your devoted 'Dad.' "

"Now, Antie, isn't he just the best dad in the world? Won't we have a grand time in Denver shopping?"

With the telltale blushes she couldn't hide, Betty hesitated. "Maybe we will see Mr. Strange."

Auntie Bland busy kneading the bread, but she didn't fail to catch the sad note in Betty's voice.

"I wonder why he never has written to us? He never has sent me a poor little postal card. How nice of him to say in his letter to uncle that he would be pleased to see me in Denver some time. Auntie, don't you think it was real mean of him?"

Betty took the plates from the cupboard and left the kitchen to lay the table. Bob was removing his overcoat.

"Gee! It's getting pretty cold." "Oh! I like cold weather. I am the best winter plant you ever saw. At Miss Macy's school I could stay with the sled longer than any of the girls, and never did have my nose or feet frozen. I call attention to the fact, for what a time we had rubbing snow on the girls who were thin blooded."

"Well! Betty, now I know you are cold proof. Why not come with me to Silver Plume to-morrow? I must go up and look over the plant I bought."

Quickly the girl was all enthusiasm.

"May I, Bob?" she asked. "I am wild to go down in a mine. I think it will be loads of fun."

With great reluctance, Auntie Bland gave her consent.

The next morning early Auntie and Uncle Bland watched them off. It was a cold day, bright and windy. The drive to Silver Plume was considered one of the sights of Colorado and the scenery this time of the year was glorious. Snow covered mountains raised their lofty peaks majestically, reaching the blue sky where baby clouds romped and played hide and seek among the big grey smoky pillows that piled high in the distance. The red ball of Old Sol, gradually came from its hiding place down behind the ancient rocks until it crowned the hills and valleys with smiling brightness. The road wound around and around the hills, and the shacks dotted here and there sent up curling gray smoke from the rock chimneys to join the heavens.

Miners with dinner pails went whistling along the beaten path, full of the joy of living in the anticipation of wealth that they felt was sure to come, for each day's hard digging brought the golden nuggets nearer. Now and then the small canvas or portable house told the sad story. Weak lungs, fresh air, outdoor life, the port of last resort. Many of the unfortunate ones have grown

strong. They love the glorious west that gives them new life and sends new blood romping through their veins, and would not exchange places with the most petted idols in the crowded cities.

Bob and Betty stopped at a small shack where an old man was sitting in the sun whittling on a stick.

"We will ask him to have some of our lunch."

"Sure!" came quickly from Bob.

Betty made the coffee and spread the contents of the well filled basket. She thoroughly enjoyed the interesting stories of the old man. After bidding their host good day they continued on their journey.

"We will be there now in another hour," said Bob. "This steep climb is the last. We can see the smoke from the Plume now."

The car went slowly up the mountain, finally gaining the top.

"Here we are, see over there? We will make a quick run."

On reaching the mine, Bob made arrangements for Betty to go down into the shaft. They laughed heartily, enjoying every moment of the novel experience. A steady northeast wind was blowing.

"We will drive at a good speed home," Bob informed Betty. It will not take us as long to make Boulder, for we are going down hill all the way. The boss here says we are in for snow, but thinks we will make home before it begins."

Bob tucked the heavy rugs securely about Betty, turned his great collar up high about his ears, jumped in the car, waving to the miners who stood around, and took the wheel.

"We will make this a record drive, Betty. Sure glad we are going down hill."

A blizzard was coming. Suddenly whirling out of a cedar thicket came a twisting, blowing blanket of snow and the storm was upon them, one of those Colorado storms which roar with freezing breath down the mountains. The snow, sifting faster, had begun to cover the low dried grass, the protruding rocks and the craggy trees. Betty cuddled closer to Bob, feeling a sense of security in the warmth of his body. The cold was biting through her heavy coat, her ears felt numb under the toboggan cap, and she bit her lips, firmly protesting that she was all right to Bob's question, "Warm enough, girl?" Oh!" he assured her, "we will be there pretty soon."

The whirling snow shut off the landmarks, and the sky could not be distinguished from the snow-covered mountains. It was growing very cold. Suddenly a buzzing, whizzing noise—the car refused to go. Bob tried hard to start it, without success.

“No use,” he said. “We are stuck. Don’t be afraid, Betty, for someone will come along, poor little kid. We will blow the horn.”

The long blasts of the siren rung out upon the air, and the howling wind seemed to send the echo back with fiendish delight. Again and again the weird sound rang out, with no answer to their signal of distress. Betty tried hard to suppress the sobs rising in her throat.

“Don’t, dear, now sit still, and keep the robes close about you,” said Bob. Let me climb out, for maybe I can do something to the engine, or tell where we are. I might see a light.”

Betty sat huddled, a limp forlorn creature waiting, listening. She could hear no sound save the wind. With a frantic shriek she screamed, “Bob! Bob!” No answer.

She jumped to the ground, and stood in the midst of a circle of snowy white, the wind howling and moaning coldly about her.

"Oh! why did I come," she sobbed. With great effort she called again for Bob. She thrust her almost frozen face into the very breath of the mountain storm and walked doggedly into the direction that her feet carried her. How cold she was growing. A poor little rabbit crouched on his chilled paws. She was close enough to pick him up, yet he didn't move. Ahead of her she could see some beast hurrying through the snow. She felt a quick chill as though icy water was closing around her, and groping half frozen and breathless she staggered on.

"Oh! God, have mercy. Bob!" the weak voice trailed away. She didn't know that the God of the Universe in Divine Providence had led her straight to the cabin of "Lucky Jack," the hermit miner.

"Gad!" he ejaculated. "This is a blizzard. Guess I better hurry up washing these dishes and get in some wood. Looks like it isn't going to let up."

With his coat buttoned tight, he closed the cabin door and bent over the woodpile now covered thickly with snow. He stooped to lift a heavy stick, and the object that he found was soft, a human being.

"God! A woman," He raised the frozen form in his arms and took her into the cabin. Awkwardly he laid her upon his bunk. He grabbed a bucket and hastily brought it filled with snow. He rubbed her hands and face briskly. The skin began to turn from blue to flaming red. Jack saw the eyelids quiver and grow moist with suffering, yet she made no sound. The white teeth began to clinch and cut a red ridge in the swollen lip.

"Game, darn game," he said to himself as he rubbed the little hands roughly.

The fire had grown hot by this time, and the pine-knots blazed halfway up the chimney, flooding the room with light. The frost was out of her fingers, her eyes opened wide, and Betty saw the big form bending over her, the kind eyes smiling into hers. "Oh! Oh!" she wailed, "where am I?"

You are all right, Miss, but we must get these wet clothes off." Pulling her gently to her feet, he helped her struggle out of the heavy coat that was wet through. He hung it on a chair before the fire to dry. Placing a big fur robe over the large rocking chair, he tenderly placed the limp creature in front of the blazing fire. Kneeling down he unlaced the boots that made him think of fairy stories.

"I am afraid your toes are frostbit and we must soak them in ice water. Gee! kid, I know it hurts, but not for long."

Vigorously rubbing the half frozen feet, the blood began to tingle and Betty knew that was a good sign. She was feeling drowsy and comfortable.

"Where is Bob?" she asked.

Then the full realization came upon her—Bob was out there in the storm. The violent paroxysm of grief rent her body with sobs. Finally Jack got the story of their day's outing to the mines, that the storm had overtaken them and the car refused to go. Bob had gotten out to see what had happened. She waited and called. She tried to find him.

"The last I remember I was trying hard to follow some animal," she told him. "I ran—then I couldn't take another step."

"You were following Old Bess, my cow," Jack muttered. "She always comes home when a storm is brewing. I heard her bellowing just before I went out to get the wood and found you all in a lump, almost froze to death. Guess Old Bess was telling me I had company waitin' outside," and

"Lucky Jack" tried to laugh and cheer the girl.

"Oh! can't you find Bob?"

"Now just you wait till I get you straight, then I will go out and look for him. No doubt, he's run up ag'in some shack."

Pulling a box from under his bunk, he took out a pair of heavy woolen sox.

"I guess these won't be much of a fit on the Cinderella feet, but they are warm, so put 'em on. Yours will be dry pretty soon, your shoes too. I am going to make a pot of coffee and feed you up some. Then I will start a search for Bob."

Betty's hand shook as she held the cup. Taking it from her, Jack held it to her lips. He seated himself upon the arm of the chair, and she leaned against him, so close that a strand of her golden hair clung to his sweater. Her face with her lips to the cup were very near, so near he could have kissed her. She was a baby, and he hadn't seen such a creature for twenty years. His heart beat furiously, and he longed to clasp her to his bosom and tell her not to be afraid, to cuddle her and sing an almost forgotten lullaby. He set his teeth hard and gripped the cup.

"Now, kid, I am going to leave you here, but don't be scared. Plenty of wood and plenty to

eat, but don't you go out that door for you might get lost. When you get sleepy, pile up over there on the bunk, and you will be as warm as toast in this cabin. I call it stormproof. I am going to find Bob, but more than likely he's in some shack around here."

He dragged out his heavy snow pack, kicked off his leather leggins and shoes, and, lacing his pack carefully, put on an extra sweater and heavy coat, and pulled his knit cap down over his ears.

He opened the door and let the storm in. The wind howled, the snow had ceased to fall, but the cracking of the heavy storm could still be plainly heard.

"So long, kid, keep warm, and do as I told you."

"Lucky Jack" stepped out to face the blizzard. Somewhere in that white desert a man was lost—maybe buried.

"I am afraid he has passed over. Anyway, I can do my best. I will rouse the miners."

Heading for the nearest shack, he plowed through the snow. At last he saw a light, and placing his hands to his mouth he gave a long loud call that all shack dwellers recognized as the distress signal. The even whiteness of the snow was knee deep, and the cold caught at his breath until

his lungs ached. The strain of the call left him almost breathless, but on he went, straining his ears to listen. He was sure he had heard a call, or was it only an echo mocking the loneliness? A dim light shone out in the distance. Yes, another, he was nearing the shack village. New strength came to his weary limbs, now that help was at hand. Again he called. The door of a shack opened and three men came in view, answering the signal. As quickly as he could he told of the lost man. One of the men spoke up.

"I saw a stalled automobile as I came in from Boulder. Seems it might be a couple of miles down the road, but there was nobody in it. I thought whoever was caught in the storm had got out and hunted cover."

All night the men looked for the lost man without success. The morning with its glorious sun sparkling upon the snow drifts found them still investigating every mound. They came upon the abandoned car, but no trace of Bob Wrenn. Every shack sent out men to aid the search.

Lucky Jack had made up his mind it was useless and wondering what he would tell the kid. A yell came rounding down the mountain and he knew that the body had been found. Long before

he reached the place he could see men handling an improvised stretcher. The men trailed to the shack village in the back room of the one store, and tenderly laid the dead body upon a cot to await the ethics of law. A coroner must state the specific cause of death, and the examination showed his shirt front covered with blood. A hemorrhage of the lungs, brought on by over exertion and excitement, wandering through the snowstorm. He may have seen a light and tried to call.

Lucky Jack found the telegraph operator and insisted that he send a rush message to Mr. Bland in Boulder, assuring him that Betty was all right and to tell him of young Wrenn's death. A miner with his sleigh came along loaded with supplies. Jack bargained for a ride as far as his shack. The nearer he came to home, the harder he found it would be to tell the girl.

"I never could stand to see children cry; it hurts me through and through."

Opening the door, he saw Betty bending over the fire. She came quickly to him. Her face eager, but the question died on her lips, as she saw the sad confirmation of her fears in the strong man's face.

"Oh! No, no, it can't be. Is he dead?" she moaned.

Jack drew the girl close to him. "There, now, cry it all out here," and Betty clung to the big strong man. She was not afraid. He tried to soothe her as he would a small child. A long time he sat by her as she lay in his bunk sobbing. He patted her hand and stroked her golden hair and tried to tell her things he had almost forgotten. Somewhere away back in memory there was a baby sister who had golden hair. He remembered when her dolls were broken, or any childish grief overtook her, that she would always find him and cuddle in his arms for comfort. All night he dreamed. The old fire he thought had burned out was only banked, but gently the ashes had been swept from them. Again he was on fire, for he wanted life, love, companionship, home and children. Again he demanded imperiously of life. It was like killing one's self all over again after going through purgatory.

God often grows whimsy and puts a soul deep and warm and rare as a priceless ruby into a rough, unbeautiful body. It must be that the great heart of God loves these surprises he hides from all but an understanding few. He sets them like rocks in weary lands and desolate places.

Betty watched Jack move about the room, his face hidden in the shadow, and she knew with all the roughness he had a heart of pure gold.

The morning was ushered in by a radiant sun, before Betty fell asleep, and the thoughts that troubled her were sad and the questions seemed to have no answer. She looked into the fire and watched the coals fall into fantastic shapes. Her eyes closed wearily. Suddenly she was awakened by voices on the outside. She sat up and listened. Yes, it was Uncle Bland. The tears filled her eyes, but before she knew two strong arms were around her.

"Bless you, child, how we have worried. It seemed as if I would never get here. I started right away the minute I got the telegram from Lucky Jack."

She sat quietly on her uncle's knee, listening to the details of the search for Bob and how Jack found her right at his door.

After dinner, consisting of sweet potatoes, corn-bread and fried meat with black coffee, the sleigh was brought around to the door, and the horses champing their bits were ready to be off. Tucking the robes carefully, Lucky Jack bid them good-bye. He watched the sleigh until it was a tiny

speck in the distance.

Something had happened in his dreary existence. He would work his claim with new vigor. A glimpse of heaven had at last shone through the twenty years of solitude. Going into the one room shack, he missed the presence of the young girl. He closed the door, lighted his pipe, then went to the cupboard, and reached for writing material. He mused, with uplifted pen.

"Yes! the time has come," he said. "I will face the world once more." With shaking, nervous hand he wrote far into the night, sealing the closely written sheets. He put the letter in front of the clock, where every time he raised his eyes, he could see, "Mr. George Wade, Richmond, Va."

Kneeling by his bunk, he fervently asked the God of the universe to give him strength and courage to go back to the world, who *lost faith* in him and believed him guilty of a crime for which the real offender had paid with his life, and his name was cleared. For years he had seen "personals" in New York papers, telling *Jack Wade* to write home; that information of him was sought, but so hurt was the man he lived on as the hermit, "Lucky Jack." His fortune grew steadily. *Luck* seemed to go hand in hand with the loneliness.

In Denver "Lucky Jack" had bank accounts with several large concerns.

Kicking off his boots, Jack prepared to turn in for the night. A white object met his gaze. Stooping, he lifted her handkerchief, the dainty perfume stirred his senses—the room seemed filled with holy incense that wreathed and wound around in wonderful dreams. He awoke in the morning with the handkerchief still in his hand. After his breakfast and the shack put in order, he took the letter down and gazed at it long, placing it carefully in his inside pocket. Taking the dainty square of linen, he wrapped it in one of his own heavy handkerchiefs, and hid it away in the vest pocket right over his heart, there to remain to give him courage. Covering the fire with ashes and lighting his pipe, he closed the door and headed for the shack village. All mail went from there.

CHAPTER IX

Outside the snow lay like a blanket, soft and white. Dora and Daniel were enjoying their breakfast. The open fire made the room cozy and aided the furnace in keeping the house warm.

"Daniel, dear," said Dora, "I fear you are working too hard. I noticed your light last night and many nights, burning so late. You should be careful. It seems years since you spent an evening with me, or that *you* have gone out for pleasure. You haven't been once to the theatre, and we have so many good attractions."

Smiling at the mother he adored, as he leisurely buttered his toast, Daniel replied: "I am really conscience stricken. What's at the theatres now? We will certainly take a night off. Martha, please let me have the Morning News. Look, dear," handing his mother the paper, "I will hurry through breakfast and stop on the way to the office and get good seats."

"Oh! Daniel," the keen despair in his mother's voice struck a chord, that vibrated with anxiety.

He reached for the paper that trembled in his mother's shaking hands. The pallor of her face alarmed him as he saw her eyes were riveted upon the glowing headlines "Found dead in the snow, Robert Wrenn of New York." With anxious breath, he read aloud the full account of the trip to Silver Plume; how Betty stumbled to the shack of "Lucky Jack." Something welled up in his heart, a longing for Betty. He would go to her at once, poor child. How she must have suffered! It only took the realization that great danger had overtaken her, to awaken the love Daniel had fought. It was not a sudden knowledge leaping full grown into being, but the product of slow germination, and now he realized and knew that Betty was the brightness he was missing out of his life. He did not know he had found it until now, as he saw her almost frozen, abandoned in the storm. He sprang to his feet, to his mother's side.

"What is it, mother dear?"

For a time they stared at each other, and there were bright red spots on her cheeks. As Daniel gazed he saw her lips pale and quiver, and tears were flooding her eyes which she struggled to keep back. Tenderly embracing his mother, he said:

"No wonder, dear, you are so shocked, I told you so much about the good people who entertained me in Boulder. A terrible death for the poor chap. He was out here trying to get his health back. A likeable fellow."

For an hour Daniel sat with his mother, telling her of Betty. With a quick glance at his watch—"I am late—now please, dear, don't let this worry you," kissing Dora gently. "You tender little hen, you are always thinking of some poor *mother* and what you would do if your Daniel were to come to grief. Isn't that half your trouble, mother dear?"

Lifting her off her feet in a quick embrace, Daniel hurried to catch the car he saw rounding the corner. Dora sat with the paper, reading carefully every word. "Relatives have been notified. Robert Wrenn, wealthy banker and clubman of New York City, the uncle and guardian of the young man, Mr. Wrenn, was reached in Chicago, and will arrive Tuesday to take charge of his nephew's affairs."

Dora laid her head upon her arms and sobbed. With calmness, born of despair, she arose and began to make ready for the day's work. She was painting a portrait of one of Denver's wealthiest

women, a leader of society, a woman whose beauty must be found in the soul which shown from the deep set blue eyes. Dora stood at the easel, the pallet filled with crimson and white to blend into rose. Something she read in the woman's face, brought to mind a verse that appealed to her and she often repeated, tenderly she whispered:

“We live and die tho our hopes run high,
In spite of the toil and tears,
For we catch the gleam of our vanished dream,
Down the path of the untrod years.”

“I wonder if many women bear their burden alone?” The thought of any hurt to Daniel filled her with sorrow more deep than she could understand. She seemed to see a venturesome baby cloud in his sky; all these years she had guarded the story of her life—no one save Martha knew the past; now was she to be humiliated? Was the cruel, unsympathetic world to gloat over the fall of woman, her complete surrender?”

“Oh, Robert, after all these years, bitter humiliation for me, for you the eternal sting of having failed the woman who loved you, with all that was best in her. I know you cannot throw away the memories.”

A woman's hopes are woven as sunbeams, a shadow annihilates them. Yesterday Dora was only Daniel's mother, who fed him with tenderness and caresses, the milk of her heart. Why should man, who is strong, be forgiven so much, and woman, who is weak, get the worst and be forgiven so little? The yoke of love is heavier than that of all the virtues. No woman finds peace until she has tasted of all the poisoned dishes at the table of life. Dora's banquet was spread early, and she partook freely. More than twenty years had been spent trying to forget. *She gave all*, her best years. Now with Daniel as the inspiration she worked on and on; her hand was the master hand and "success" crowned her efforts. Her aching brow burned with the weight.

"Well done, good and faithful servant"; wealth was hers; the glorious West had opened its arms to her. Daniel had a high place.

"Oh! heavenly father, I pray from a mother's heart, let nothing cloud his life or close the lips in death that would dare breathe my shame. My boy—my boy. God gave you to me, my *right*, a woman's right, the child of her love. Thank God, I was brave enough to acknowledge you. I could

not have lived, had I given you away or cast you off."

Dora fell upon the couch. There Martha found her. A note from Daniel asking that his bags be packed for a two days' trip and sent by bearer.

"I am going to Boulder; bye-bye, mother. I hope I shall have glad news for you when I come home. Love. Daniel."

It must be the irony of fate, the beginning, when Daniel was called to Boulder to address "The Woman's Club," and there meet Bob Wrenn. Dora's heart beat almost to suffocation in dread that Robert Wrenn while in Denver would meet Daniel, for dread in some guise had never been absent in all these years. Sometimes an overwhelming apprehension of public exposure, when she would be unable to make Daniel understand. The man she once loved had it in his power to destroy her. Could he, would he?

"My boy, my son. I was in a blank hell of despair, and my life hemmed in by waste and folly. In the darkest night when a starless blanket covered a bed of pitch, your baby hands came like poppy flowers and rekindled my desire to live, to paint, to work and to live for you. You have made my life; I have faithfully atoned."

All afternoon she lay there, the past looming—the future—she was afraid to contemplate. In the dining room the table was laid. In the center were beautiful roses.

“Yes, dear, Daniel sent them,” Martha said, answering the inquiring look of admiration. “I didn’t bring them up to you, as I thought it would be nice to surprise you. Bless his heart, that boy always makes us realize how thoughtful he is.”

“Yes, Martha, he never allows us to forget him.”

All afternoon, as Dora, alone in her studio, reviewed the bitter past of her life, living over each hour separately and arming herself to face the days to come, trying to shake off the dread that almost overpowered her, Daniel was hastening to Boulder with the song of songs in his heart. He could hardly wait to tell Betty, as she was his world, and he wanted her above everything. It seemed to him that he had always wanted her. All the hope born of determination was flooding his brain, to go back to his home, and be able to tell his mother of Betty—that she was to be his wife—her daughter. Could any dream of happiness be greater?

At 5:30 Daniel arrived in Boulder. At the hotel he was greeted most cordially. Many recognized him, and remembering the forceful speech he had made there in the summer, which was already bearing fruit. Men were discussing the sad death of young Wrenn and the narrow escape of Miss Bland. In the telephone booth, after getting the Bland number, he waited nervously for the voice at the other end.

"Yes, this is Miss Bland. Mr. Strange? How do you do? Indeed, I remember you. Yes, come right out. Auntie says we will wait supper for you. We will be awfully glad."

The 'phone clicked. Betty stood with both hands upon her heart that beat furiously, the blood surging through her body, her face crimson, and genuine happiness shone from her eyes.

"Oh, Auntie, is there anything I can do to help you?" she asked.

"No, my dear, you better run upstairs and prink up, and be ready to meet Mr. Strange when he arrives. I think I will change my dress, too," noticing the flaming cheeks and happy sparkle in Betty's eyes.

With motherly kindness, Mrs. Bland said: "I am mighty glad to see some color in your face

once more, for you have been pale as a ghost ever since that terrible accident, and I have been worrying about you."

Throwing her arms about Auntie Bland, kissing her affectionately, Betty ran to her room before the surprised woman could say a word to her. When she did recover her breath—"Well!! girls have flighty ways."

Standing in the middle of her room, Betty was trying to decide upon the dress to wear. Taking a white serge from the closet she observed: "I believe I will put this one on. I think it is my lucky dress. Dad likes it, all men like simple gowns."

Carefully surveying herself in the glass, she smiled approval at the graceful straight lines of the heavy white serge. One touch of color, a string of turquoise beads that had belonged to her mother. A talisman of love, she was sure they would prove, for hadn't her mother worn them the first time she had seen her "Dad" in San Antonio, nearly twenty years ago? Who knows? Some occult presence might abide in the shining blue. Anyway, they were very becoming and just suited the white dress. Her reverie was interrupted by voices in the hall. Yes, it is Uncle

Bland and Mr. Strange. A solemn moment nearly always precedes the anticipation of great joy. Betty closed her eyes and whispered:

"Oh, Daniel, I feel that my soul has sight of the immortal sea that brought us together."

At the head of the stairs she hesitated. A clutch of fear in the joy that was flooding her soul caused a trembling of hands and limbs. Then—two strong hands clasping hers, two blue eyes burning into her very brain. A new understanding mysteriously found birth in her heart and two strong arms crushed her. It seemed as if her soul had been summoned to her lips.

"My Betty—my sweetheart—my wife," soberly and tenderly Daniel poured out his love.

There was no hesitation as he planned *their* future.

"We must tell your Uncle and Auntie Bland," said he; "there must be no secret. My heart is already ragged with the gnawing. You do care, I know you do," he rattled on in Cupid's language.

Betty, too happy to answer, the hand he toyed with, the smiles she gave were assurance of her love. Mr. Bland came in to say supper was ready and Auntie Bland was waiting. Daniel, true to his honest and straightforward nature,

with his arm about Betty, "who was covered with happy blushes," said to Uncle Samuel:

"I want your consent and congratulation—Betty has consented to be my wife," announced Daniel. "Oh! yes, maybe it is sudden, the asking, but I think she stole my heart the first day I saw her. I have intended all the time to tell her what I so hurriedly told her today. I wanted so much more than I have to offer her; but, Uncle Bland," drawing Betty closer to him, "when I read the account of the storm and the danger she had undergone, I knew I must hurry to her and ask her to share my life, my love."

The young man's eagerness impressed Mr. Bland. Wiping his glasses, Uncle Bland said:

"Well! Well! I am surprised—but"—clasping Daniel's hand—"I am pleased, too. All girls must get married, and I know of no young man more capable of taking care of a home than you; so, Daniel, I give freely my consent—but," (laughing) "you'll not have such easy sailing with her '*dad.*'"

In the diningroom, Auntie Bland gave a cordial welcome to the guest. Supper was eaten with happy and cheerful passing of repartee. No

allusion was made to the death of Bob, only that his Uncle was expected most any day.

Late at night, Daniel said "Goodnight" to Betty, and it was with a promise that very soon she would make his mother a visit, and Christmas would be the happiest of his life, for the celebration would be a wedding and two loving hearts would be joined together.

"Yes, dear Betty, I am going to write to your father to-morrow."

Slyly bringing his head down to hers, she whispered:

"I will write to him, too, and tell him how I love you, dear, and that you are the most wonderful man in the world. I am sure, Daniel, 'dad' will say, '*bless you, my children.*' Goodnight, dear."

He was gone! She watched him disappear down the hill. Holding the beads to her breast, she said, "I wonder if you did have anything to do with it all?"

All ready for bed, she drew the coverlid about her shoulders, gave the pillow a punch, settled herself in comfortable abandon, floating away into dreamland.

Daniel spent two happy days in Boulder. It was too cold to be out of doors very much, but the warm welcome of Auntie and Uncle Bland, the blazing grate that added its cheer, held them spellbound. Betty talked freely to Daniel of her life from the time she could remember; he in turn told her of his mother, and how he loved her—then—gently, how Dora would love Betty.

"You will be happy with us, dear," assured Daniel. "Mother has *only* me. When I tell her all about you, she will be happy because *I am*."

Uncle Bland and Betty took Daniel to the train. The engine was steaming in. Then he leaned over, kissing Betty tenderly, "Goodbye, my precious one. I will *work* *impatiently* waiting to take you home."

Daniel sat restlessly—the train was creeping—how he longed to get home to his mother, how anxious to tell her all about Betty, this glorious creature who had promised to be his wife. The train pulled into the Denver station. He hurried to a cab. At home he found Dora and Martha lingering over their coffee. The clasping of his mother to his bosom, the whispered endearing words gave to the woman blessed assurance of his love. In the firelight glow, holding her hand,

Daniel told of his *other love*, the crowning glory of his life. When she had listened without comment, terror tugged at his heart.

“Mother—mother, are you not glad?”

“Yes, *my love*, I am *glad*. Always remember that your wife comes above every other love. *Daniel*, with all my heart I welcome your wife—*my daughter*.

CHAPTER X

Christmas is here and Betty's father was to be present at her wedding. Mr. Bland's visit to Denver was filled with sadness and gladness. He loved Betty with more than fatherly devotion, for she was the link that bound him to his beautiful wife, who gave her life for the wee babe. The only words spoken after her birth—as the babe lay upon her breast—he would never forget her smile when she whispered, "Betty will take my place."

So the child was named Betty. It must have been a dream fancy—for no name had been selected for a daughter, for all their plans through the weeks and months of happy waiting had been for a *son*, a young *Tom*. Now that the end had come, his dream was over. But we must live on, so with a heavy heart he took up the burden of life for Betty. Now that his little girl was grown into womanhood, she was to be married. From Daniel's letter he knew that it was love—from his banker's that Daniel Strange was an upright, honorable man, on the road to wealth.

What more could a man ask for his child? In Denver he would visit Daniel.

As the train drew into the Denver station, he was scanning the crowd. Before he realized the train had come to a standstill and he was grabbed by the hand. A splendid young chap, in conventional stormcoat and Stetson hat, was talking to him and heartily shaking his hand.

"Somehow, the minute I set eyes on you I felt sure *you* were Betty's father," Daniel confided. "I was just looking 'em over, making up my mind which *one* to greet. Something about you made me sure."

The two chatted as familiarly as if they had known each other always. Tom Bland plunged into the depths of the young man's character with the fineness that attainment and long practice gives. He saw a man so well bred that he had no conceit, and the honest blue eyes and broad brow proved his intellect. A genuine liking for the man Betty had chosen sprung up in his heart, and now he was not afraid to trust his priceless treasure into Daniel's keeping.

"We are going straight home," said Daniel. "Mother is waiting dinner."

All the way the two discussed topics of interest. Daniel found Tom Bland a true Westerner—a real man of the plains, big and broad in his well-founded ideas of government and splendidly informed upon the goings on at the capitol.

“Seems to me it looks mighty like war,” said Betty’s father. “The President has written about all the notes he is going to. I think the next thing we know he will be sending soldiers over yonder to show Germany she can’t take the whole world and put a wire fence ’round it. What do you think of the situation, Mr. Strange?”

A shadow crossed over Daniel’s face. “Well, I must admit it looks as if the warclouds are gathering, and our President has kept us out of it as long as he can. When Uncle Sam calls there will be such a rush to arms the Huns will wonder where all the Americans came from. William will see that we are *‘not afraid to fight.’* Here we are, turning into a graveled drive. Mother bought this place when I was a youngster, and I have tumbled over on every foot of this lawn. After I was sent away to school it seemed to me I only waited for the holidays to get back here—to romp. Most of the boys around here had ‘keep off the grass’ signs—but not me. Mother thought

grass was made for boys and I certainly believe in outdoor life. You know 'Dore' is my mother? Wonderful—I should say she is. The long room with the skylight and so many windows is her studio."

Opening the door, Daniel went with Mr. Bland to the guestroom. "I hope you will be comfortable and at home with us. I will let mother know we have arrived and we will have dinner soon. Am sure we will both do justice to one of mother's dinners."

The door closed. The man stood in the middle of the room looking around—the fire in the grate, the pictures on the wall, the comfortable inviting chintz covered chairs, the few magazines and books, everything breathed of *home*. The atmosphere was full of cheer—a woman's heart reflected everywhere. O course, he would be comfortable and at home here. Brushing his near-bald head vigorously, he eyed himself in the glass.

"Guess I better change my collar," he said, as he adjusted the black four-in-hand to his perfect satisfaction. He heard Daniel opening the door and he stepped out to join him.

"Mother, this is Betty's father—Mr. Bland."

Dora held out her hand, and her voice and manner confirmed the happy welcome that pervaded the air of the home.

The conversation during dinner was upon the rumors of war and the struggles of the war-stricken nations. A lull in the subject, so close to thousands of mothers, gave Dora the opportunity to broach the *one* thing near her heart, Daniel and his future. She lifted her dark eyes, looking squarely at her guest and said:

"There is always a touch of sadness when our children begin to build for themselves, for we fear more or less for the firmness of the structure. Mr. Bland, I want you to know I love Betty, for she is a *sweet child*, unspoiled, and the world has not given her any of the bruises that leave scars that time only can eradicate. I am going to do my best to make up to her for the *mother* she has never known. From the day Daniel told me that he would soon give me a daughter, I accepted her as mine and I am sure you will have faith in my son."

Her large blue eyes were like violets dipped in dew and within their depths smoldered strange fires.

Long after midnight the family enjoyed the pleasant companionship of intimate surroundings. Dora with her embroidery, Martha with her knitting, listened to Mr. Bland and Daniel in good natured arguments over the political situation. After the last light had been turned out, and all the house quiet, Tom Bland lay thinking of Dora. "She holds mysteries in her heart which the world can never fathom," he thought. "She has suffered, but alone."

The next day was spent seeing Denver. Daniel was pleased to introduce his father-in-law (soon to be) to the friends he had made among the old and substantial citizens of Denver, and it was with new appreciation of Daniel that Mr. Bland found growing constantly as he watched the meeting of the young man with those men who had long been honored as the substantial bulwarks of finance and brain of Colorado. At five o'clock they said good-bye at the station.

"Mother and I will be in Boulder Monday," said Daniel. "You see, I am taking no chances on these Colorado snowstorms."

Tom Bland smiled at the well set-up chap.

"That's right, boy. Goodbye then 'til Monday."

Daniel wondered if he had come up to all expectations, for he wanted Betty's father to like him. He knew their home must be builded with love for all four, essentially—*one family*. Hurrying home to his mother, impatient to hear her assuring words:

"My boy, you have nothing to fear, Mr. Bland is good and kind, worthy to be Betty's father and *yours*. Now do you wish to see what I am going to wear at my son's wedding? And Martha's, too?"

With the enthusiasm of a small boy he watched the untying of the packing boxes. A gown of shimmering gray, all lacy with silver threads, was held up to view.

"Oh, mother, you will be wonderful. I was so afraid you would wear one of those dark ones you seem to like. I have always wanted to see you in just such a gown."

"For your wedding, dear, there must be no darkness—even Martha let *me* select her wedding frock—all *white*."

Dora held the soft crepe up to be admired. Daniel leaned over and kissed the faithful Martha.

"You blessed old sweetheart—you and mother just think of more ways to make me the happiest

boy in the world. I wonder how all these years you have just kept on thinking up new things, every day a *new* thought,—you two have old *Al-ladin* beat a mile.”

At dinner he kept up his happy chatter, when in the evening he busied himself in the afternoon paper, the two women who sat with their fancy work, rocked and dreamed. Dora traveled way back to youthful days—filled with her own plans for a future such as her boy was looking forward to. Now her plans were all for Daniel. Maybe, who knows? there will be another.

“I wonder if all mothers build castles where babies come and grow and make dreams where visions turn to realities that make the world a dwelling place of joy and sorrow.”

Dora realized that Daniel would belong to another and his first consideration must be his wife. She would be just a part of him, but in his children she would renew her own youth—her sun would not go down in loneliness.

Monday morning found Dora, Daniel and Martha on their way to Boulder. The weather was ideal, the kind for brides—clear and cold—the sun shining with all its might, and the little towns were in their holiday dress. In windows every-

where were wreaths of holly—jolly crowds of young people with anticipation of old Santa—who would come scampering through the village, leaving wonderful toys for all good little boys and girls. The whole world seemed glad. When the porter called out “Boulder” Daniel gathered the bags. At the steps of the train stood Uncle Samuel and Mr. Bland. Mr. Bland at the wheel sent the car bounding through the town. As they neared the house the lights from every window gleamed and sent a welcome ahead. The door opened wide and Betty and Auntie Bland hurried to the car. A happy scene. Dora forgot some of the aches of years, remembering only the present. Betty, with both arms about her whispered “*mother*” and lulled all sorrow to rest. Daniel, standing smilingly by, put his arm around Betty, asking, “How about me, don’t I come in for a little attention?”

“Indeed, you do—but mother first.”

Betty took charge of Dora and Martha, showing them to their rooms. She helped to unpack and put the toilet articles in place and she clapped her hands in childish delight when she saw Dora’s shimmering gown.

"Oh! how wonderful, how beautiful you will be. We will be proud of our mother."

She kissed the cheeks where tinges of red were hiding.

"Come on with me—in here—see *my dress*."

She led Dora into the room, opening into hers. "This is my room—all the things I am to wear on my wedding day are here. I am wild to try my dress on, but auntie says it is bad luck."

Dora gazed spellbound and fascinated at the white satin with pearls and yards of soft old lace. The veil with orange blossoms, the small white slippers, gloves, and dainty lingerie—fit for a princess—every evidence of exquisite and expensive taste.

"Nixon of New York sent all my clothes," said Betty. "Dad was awfully good—said for me to have everything I wanted. Sometimes I think maybe I shouldn't have spent so much just for clothes, but I just could not help it. I wanted to do Daniel proud. It does take so many clothes for a winter in Florida. Oh! mother dear, I am just wild to try this dress on. Do you believe in those old signs."

Dora's mind went quickly back to the old studio days with all the Bohemian superstitions—with Betty's hand in hers as she answered lightly:

"Well, dear, I can't say I believe in them, but we are so happy, why tempt old man trouble?"

Downstairs friends and neighbors were dropping in to meet Mr. Strange and his mother. Already the decorators had begun to make the room look like the important spot, for the vines were climbing everywhere over the pictures and walls. Holly and mistletoe smiled at each other from the corners and chandeliers. The bridesmaids were there.

"No, we have no groomsmen," Betty answered an inquiring friend. "I am to walk in with my dad and Daniel with his mother—now don't you think that lovely—so different. This is *our* wedding—we planned it ourselves. You just wait and see if it doesn't turn out to be just the kind of wedding we should have."

If you have ever been in Colorado in the winter-time you know just what a glorious sight it is to wake up in the morning with the sun shining upon the snow covered mountain, sparkling and scintillating like thousands of jewels, the blue sky meeting the snowcap in the distance.

Betty stood at the window gazing out upon the gorgeous work of nature.

"My wedding day," she whispered—"my wedding day."

Promptly at twelve the strain of the old Mendelsohn march filled the rooms. Each note seemed to breathe a benediction upon the young couple. Down the stair came the six lovely maids in dainty frocks of tulle—a veritable rainbow—so well blended were colors. Daniel and his mother, then the bride with her father.

In front of an improvised altar stood the priest—"Who giveth this woman." Mr. Bland, in a voice that struggled to hide the tremor, answered, "*I do*," handing his one treasure to the man of her choice.

The ceremony over, congratulations filled the air with gladness. After the wedding breakfast, the bride's cake was cut.

As Betty went up the stairs to change her dress to her going away frock, halfway up she leaned over the railing and with a happy laugh tossed her bridal bouquet in the midst of the maids, all scrambling for it. Finally the lucky girl consented to divide it among them.

Dora was beautiful in her shimmering gown, her hair almost snowwhite, adding to her beauty. Pride in her son flushed her cheeks as she kissed

them goodbye. It was with real affection she assured them of their welcome home.

“My home is yours so long as you wish.”

Daniel and Betty left on the noon train amid the customary shower of rice and old shoes. Dora and Martha waited for a later train. The Blands did their best to persuade them to spend some time with them, but Dora felt the need of work, her brain whirled so, and in the studio she found something akin to peace.

The name of Dore the artist was well known. She had painted portraits of many Western men who had made millions in the market. Many well known visitors in the summer colony had sat for her. Some of them she knew by reputation as far back as the days when she struggled to get a footing in the artist world in New York. She studied the character of the men she painted. She realized more than ever that the hand of the artist must be guided by the brain for perception of the man finds expression in the stroke of the small brush. In the rugged miner's face she found light and darkness. The first order for a life portrait was from a man the world called hard, callous, a miner.

His children were known to speak of "the old man as a tight wad." To Dora he was void of all these characteristics. Underneath the rough exterior she found a nature as soft and kind as a child. The rest moments of the sittings were pleasantly spent. Gradually, little by little, the story of his life was told—a series of struggles—hard knocks and bitter disappointments followed each other. He told how for a trivial offense he was cut off from his family, leaving home a mere boy. He struck out for the great West—the loneliness, homesickness—constant digging with no luck. Then—when almost worn out with disappointment and loneliness—*gold*—the great opener of doors to all sides of life—was found in plenty—more than he could ever spend. The sorrows of youth had left lines in his face—the world called hard. His dislike for show and luxurious living had gained for him the name "tight wad," yet his charities were many known only to himself. His children reveled in wealth that had caused them no loss of sleep in accumulating.

When the portrait was complete *Dore* had her feet firmly planted upon the ladder of fame and success, for she had painted the soul of the man.

Daniel and Betty would not come home until early spring—he needed the rest. Since taking up his profession in Denver as a member of the law firm of Brown & Temple, he worked night and day, his youth and ambition spurring him on. While spending the winter in Florida he would have time to read up on points of law that was pending in the cases set for spring. The eager desire for knowledge and the happiness he felt in the companionship of Betty, Daniel dreamed and planned the future where honors awaited him. At St. Louis, to his great surprise, he met two college chums. Betty insisted that he spend some time with them and she would look up one of her school friends. Daniel, with severe kindness, told her the school friend would be looked up, but he thought it a splendid idea to make a party.

“That will be great, for I am sure your friends will be crazy about Goldie—she was the most popular girl in school. We were not one bit jealous when she walked off with all the honors.”

After a long telephone conversation, it was arranged that Goldie would join them at “The Jefferson,” and the boys promised not to keep them waiting for a minute after six.

Theatre tickets and a special table were looked after. Betty wondered if there was any one as happy as she. Daniel sent a wire to his mother. Somehow he seemed to feel more keenly her love, her great sacrifice—all for him. Loving Betty as he did made him realize that somewhere in his mother's life was the sacred hour—she was too beautiful, too grand a character to walk alone.

CHAPTER XL

The winter months went quickly by. Dora's work had filled every moment—orders for pictures and new pupils kept her busy. She heard regularly from Daniel and Betty, their letters were filled to the brim with happiness. Today they were coming home and a new joy radiated the soul of Dora. There was only one speck of darkness in the azure sky. She knew the quiet, secluded life she had led all these years was to change, for as the mother of Daniel she would be compelled to accept many invitations jointly with him and his wife. Daniel Strange was acknowledged one of the leading men of Colorado—his wife would be showered with attention.

A sudden great aching cry was surging from the very soul of her, a protest against the empty pain that is in the world. Martha appeared in the door and she had the welcome message. Yes, she would be here at three-thirty.

"Isn't it splendid to have such a great surprise for them. I heard them talking of cars, and both were decided upon a Stutz roadster."

Dora called the automobile company at once.

"Be sure to meet the three-thirty train. Did you get the monogram on the door? Fine!" Now for a last glimpse at the rooms to see that everything was in readiness.

Everything was new, the decorations and the furniture.

"Martha, our 'bachelor quarters' did not last long."

The two women looked carefully for any lack of comfort.

"Oh, 'Dore,' Daniel will be so pleased and so surprised. Betty will be happy here."

The sitting room is brown and gold, soft yellow lights, comfy chairs—a couch piled high with pillows of silk and tapestry, a low book-shelf hung over the couch, the floor lamps nearby and a sleepy hallow chair drawn close, showed plainly that a mother's heart had arranged for her boy's comfort. She knew that Daniel would rest here, but she knew, too, he would want Betty near by, to read to him, or maybe listen to him, while she fashioned dainty garments for another Daniel. The bedroom pink and white and the pictures upon the wall were chosen by a master mind,

happy children and dancing sprites. From the windows you looked out to the east.

Dora chose the room on account of the wonderful view, the wonderful red ball creeping from behind the mountains, until the shining reflections poured through the windows, playing hide and seek upon the polished floor. No detail had been forgotten. The bath with its well appointed dressing room, the glass enclosed porch, pot plants, some in full bloom, the two birds in their gilded cage chirping merrily to each other, as if to add their approval and join in a glad welcome to their new mistress.

"Martha, I think everything is in readiness."

Dora closed the door to go to the front window, so that she would see the car turn the corner. Only a few minutes 'til train time, and they will run out in a little while. Oh! to keep them happy.

There are women whom we admire for their strength and others beloved for their weakness. Somehow Dora represented both, the woman of strength, and her love for Daniel was her weakness. It overshadowed all else. Her one desire was his happiness. In doing for him, she lost the memory of her own sad youth. When a woman becomes obsessed with one idea, her intelligence

does not always register. Sometimes she feared her ability to always keep his love. A siren whistle filled the air. All thought save happiness and glad welcome left her as she held Betty and Daniel in close embrace.

"*My children,*" had the heart note that assured Betty that her mother was a dream come true—not the practiced welcome of a jealous mother. Could Dora have desired any greater realization of their love and appreciation of her generosity and thoughtfulness, it was hers when Daniel and Betty came pellmell down the stairs, each one trying to reach her first. She didn't go to their rooms with them, she wanted Daniel to have the happiness of leading Betty into her home, with both of them kissing and hugging her—trying to tell her of the great surprise. Nothing else in the world mattered.

"Mother, dear, what am I to say? I am afraid you have been extravagant. Why did you do so much for me—for *us?*"

The soft voice of the woman who gave silenced the protestation.

"I am only happy, dear children, so far as I can fill all the wishes and desires in your hearts—my one great love is for you two. No more about

it now. The roadster is for Betty—she will love to drive you to the office and go for you, and it will be fine for her to be out doors. Oh! I know what sweethearts like—nice long moonlight drives—all through these mountain roads—isn't that so?"

Dinner was just as a family dinner should be, eaten with apparent relish and interspersed with pleasant conversation. Dora listened to them as they detailed the events of their winter spent so happily. She knew well that the feeling she feared was slipping away from her—she was not jealous of her boy's love—they were here—with her—for all time—her's was the exalted place—his mother.

Now and then the old brightness flooded her, the merry laugh rang out, a happy family were cementing ties that would never break. Turning to Betty, Dora let the fullness of her love shine through her eyes. "My dear child, to-morrow morning you assume the place that belongs to you. This is your home—you must take charge and have everything as you desire. Martha, of course, will assist you. I am too busy these days to have much thought of housekeeping and I am greatly pleased to hand the responsibility to more capable hands."

"Dore" is fast growing in favor—it is quite the thing for the *old men* who have made millions to be painted by Dore, the artist who sees the real man and is brave enough to soften the lines.

"I am afraid my studio will have to be enlarged since some kind critic wrote in '*The Artist Age*,' " "Dore" looks beyond the wrinkles. She seems to have found the art of reproducing "the soul of the man." " Orders are coming most every day. I have some prominent people on my waiting list. My children, you have stacks of invitations. I hope many of them will be accepted—*young folks must mingle.*"

A wistful smile tried hard to play about her mouth: "I know I am included in some. Will it be asking too much if I beg to be allowed to devote myself to my work and live this quiet life I have chosen? My happiness is here within these walls; outside the world moves merrily on."

Daniel spoke quickly: "Only one time, little mother (using his pet name), will I insist. I received notice while away. My club is to give a reception for Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Strange"—leaning over her and affectionately patting the white hand that rested upon the table. "You wouldn't deny me the real happiness of saying to

the fellows, '*My mother?*' It seems to me I am the luckiest chap in the world."

Dora felt her heart beating furiously. Could she refuse?

"Oh! You bad boy, I think you will never grow up. Maybe, I must not promise, I have been so long away from the crowds I shrink—almost to aversion."

The hall clock began to strike. Dora counted to eleven.

"My! My! scamper away to bed—this will never do—I must be up early."

"We are, too. I am always going to have breakfast with Daniel," said Betty seriously.

Dora in her room paced the floor nervously. She had seen the name of Robert Wreen very often in the Denver papers and fear of meeting him, the seclusion she sought was threatened. How to refuse Daniel? All night she lay with sleepless eyes, her ingenious brain evolving scheme after scheme. By dawn she had reached a solution. As soon as breakfast was over and she had smilingly given Daniel his farewell caress, she hurried to her studio. Quickly she touched the button that called Martha. Dora looked up from the paints she was assorting.

"Come in, Martha, close the door."

Martha noticed the extreme nervous trembling of her hands as she said quickly:

"Martha, I *must go away*. Haven't you a relative—a cousin in Roswell? I *must* be called away suddenly—West—anywhere."

She began to walk the floor. "Don't ask me why I must go—only help me—your cousin, tell me about him."

"I had a letter just yesterday. He was telling me about seeing the picture you painted of old man King, the big rancher, and said he certainly wished he could come to Denver and get you to paint him. Wants it for a wedding present to his grandson. He said everybody was admiring *old man King*."

"Good, Martha, you always find a way. You write to him and tell him I will be in Roswell. What is your cousin's name? I am going West to do the portrait of a very wealthy old gentleman."

A kind Providence aided Dora. That very day Martha received a letter asking her to find out the price of a portrait and how long it would take to paint it.

Several days went by before Dora felt the time auspicious to announce her intended trip. Both Daniel and Betty tried hard to persuade her not to go, telling her how much they would miss her, but she was determined, so they watched her pack paints and brushes, helping to cover the unfinished pictures.

"Oh, you will not miss me long," said mother. "Time flies, and before you know it I will be back getting these pictures here ready. I must have a new atmosphere, see new faces, as I am afraid my work begins to have a sameness, and I can't afford to have 'Dore' lose her originality."

Thus she chatted with them all the way to the train. After seeing the train pull out of the station and waving a farewell, Betty proposed to have dinner at one of the restaurants and go to the theatre afterward.

Dora was right—they were too busy to miss her much, as they were invited everywhere. Daniel, proud of his beautiful wife, accepted nearly all invitations. The most exclusive homes were open to them, and no social gathering was complete without the *Stranges*. Betty's beauty and personality had won her many friends, and Daniel grew in popularity with old and young.

Dinner over, Daniel was comfortably resting upon the couch, reading the evening paper. Martha came to say he was wanted at the 'phone.

"Hello," said a voice. "Denis!"

"Yes!"

"Can't you get along without me?" (Pause.)

"Oh! not that, my wife will let me all right, but to-night *home* looks mighty good."

"Well, boy, if you feel that way about it, I will be right down."

Betty smiled as he came into the room.

"What is it, dear?" she asked. "Where do they want you to go?"

"To the club—several new members coming in to-night. I proposed Robert Wrenn's name, Denis feels that I should be there—so I should, but I hate like blazes to go down to-night. Why won't they let us alone? I will drive myself down. I won't be late—none of this all-night stuff."

Betty helped him with his coat, and sat by him while he changed his slippers for shoes.

"Oh! I don't mind the least bit, dear," she said. "I think a man *should* go to his club sometimes. No wonder there are so many old bachelors, for they feel as if they are going to prison on the day they take a wife."

Daniel lifted her up in his arms to kiss her, such a good, thoughtful Betty.

"Bye, bye, not for long."

Could Daniel have known the web he was weaving. Fate, the master of destinies, was winding her intricate pattern. Though two people are as far apart as the poles, when Fate ordains, the line so small it can not be seen, yet it draws and draws until the two are face to face.

So it was with Robert Wrenn and Dora Strange. The mental condition of both was pounding with memories, and constantly sending thought waves that quietly drew the silver cord that binds tighter and held the subject in both minds. Dora, afraid for Daniel; Robert Wrenn, wondering where she was. He hardly passed a night without dreams of the past. Strange the child he had disowned played small part in his thoughts. He only wondered if *she* lived—if she were happy?

After the death of Bob, the nephew he loved, he concluded to make his home in Denver. His divorce was granted. Fanny Gebhardt's wedding had been announced. New York was so full of phantoms he longed to leave behind, and so why not begin all over again? So here he concluded to stay.

After due consideration he took an apartment in one of the exclusive hotels, sending for his faithful Sim. He told him to close his New York apartment and join him in Denver as soon as possible.

In the closing and adjusting of Bob's affairs, he was brought into close contact with young Strange, the junior member of the law firm to whom he had turned all affairs over. There was a quick friendship neither understood. Robert Wrenn, the recognized cynic, found himself actually cultivating the young lawyer who had many admirable traits, he had wisdom of a man much older and on points of law he was wonderfully informed.

With Robert Wrenn's decision to locate permanently in Denver came the demand and desire to be identified with both social and business activities. The friendship begun several months before was fast growing into something more, for the mutual admiration found a heart interest. The older man found in young Strange a quiet, sympathetic companion, one he never wearied of. He wondered from time to time what it was in the boy he liked most. Daniel could not define the real feeling toward the man—respect of years, of

education? He knew well it was not his *wealth*, for neither himself or his mother gauged *the man* by material things. He held in contempt men who sought out rich patronage to claim for available friends. Daniel Strange by his own efforts was fast accumulating a fortune.

Dora had worked diligently to assure him the comforts that money gives, for so judiciously had her earnings been invested that her rating with brokerage and banking firms was very conspicuous. Naturally thrifty, she had learned to watch the market, and its fluctuations interested her. Buying and selling were pastime. She enjoyed the excitement, always careful to stay within sensible bounds.

When Daniel was ready for college, her fortune was of comfortable size. Dora had, with the assistance of Martha, taught Daniel to be of a saving and thrifty disposition—always provided with plenty of money, he was at the same time impressed with the value and desire to save and accumulate. His college life was filled with ambition for knowledge—to excell. It was born in him to admire true worth and honor success. How much money a fellow had never found any place

in his sum-up of character. There must be something real—something substantial—in his friends.

This man Robert Wrenn has a wonderful personality, yet there is something about him I find myself trying to analyze. Each day before he knew, all arrangements were made for lunch. Over their meal they would discuss intimate affairs.

"You must meet my wife," said Robert. "Suppose I 'phone to her that you will be out to dinner to-night? Betty is always happy to have my friends. My mother is in Arizona. She said she needed a change, but really (laughing heartily), I think she was anxious to give Betty and me a chance to take up the burden of life—housekeeping. Do you know she actually made her excuse for leaving '*new atmosphere*.' She's to paint an old rancher's portrait. You know 'Dore' believes in the soul, and somehow she gets right down there and brings it out."

"So 'Dore' the artist is *your mother*?" inquired Wrenn. "I have read some flattering things of 'Dore's' Western Men. The art journals are giving her many complimentary notices. I think one of her pictures is soon to be hung in the Metropolitan."

The subject of his mother's art warmed the blood, and his loyalty burst forth in her praise.

"Poor 'little mother,' just *me* and *art* seem to have been her life. We have grown up together—my father didn't care much for us. When I was very small I used to ask questions about him. I remember so well, once at Christmas time, a tree and every toy a boy could wish, were all ready. I asked my mother why *my* father did not come for Christmas. I heard the boys I played with talk so much about their father's coming home for Christmas. I was only ten, I shall never forget. I can see her yet. I can hear the sadness in her voice, as she took me in her lap and pressed my head down to her shoulder and told me there was no father to come—no one but mother, Martha and art, but as I grew to be a big boy and into manhood there would be a whole world for me, success and ambition to be crowned by love. Then she kissed me over and over."

"'My little Daniel,' said mother, 'promise never to ask about your father. Just love mother and Martha until the great love comes into your life.' Mr. Wrenn, that night stands out in my life. Since then I have tried to do all she has asked of me. She told me success and the big love would

come. It has. You must meet my mother and my wife, the two beings that make life a joy. There are no heights which I refuse to climb, aided by the most wonderful mother and the love of a devoted and beautiful wife."

Robert Wrenn listened to the young man pour out his intimate feelings. A new sensation was claiming this man of the world—a new light beginning to burn. After all there was real devotion among men. The primitive affection had not been entirely wiped out by years of prosperity and apings of fashion. Here was a man not ashamed to speak of his love for the mother who bore him and struggled to care for him.

"How I could love a boy of his type," he thought.

Daniel called Betty as soon as he reached his office, and she was pleased that Mr. Wrenn would be out. She was more than glad—for he was poor Bob's uncle. She remembered how Bob seemed to love Uncle Robert, and she really felt as if *she* already knew him.

A real southern welcome was given the New Yorker. He was strangely at home in the bosom of this family. Martha had long since ceased to be looked upon as anything but a beloved member

of the household. Robert Wrenn, seated opposite the quiet little woman introduced as Miss Wallace, little dreamed that every feature of his face was indelibly stamped upon her memory, for she was the same woman—who years before clad in a gray uniform watched the broken-hearted mother—as she saw the father of her child, determined to send him out with thousands of others.

A chaotic struggle within her was voicing the cause of Dora's sudden determination to leave Denver. What would be the end?

Robert Wrenn was strangely interested in all about him—a real sense of familiarity, homeness, crept gradually into his being. Surely he was not a stranger here. He stood before the open grate. A painting hanging there excited his immediate interest, "The Prodigal," a beautiful woman standing at the closed door of a farm house, a snow storm raging, and the light from the living room casting shadows that mocked her loneliness. The hand raised and the hesitation in the sad, young face told the story. In the corner was painted in dark brown "*Dore.*"

"Yes, that is one of mother's pet pictures. Oh, I do wish we could show you her studio," Betty

said, coming close to him and noticing the deep appreciation in his face.

"I fear you must wait until she comes home, as 'Dore's' studio is forbidden ground."

"When do you expect her?" asked Wrenn.

"Oh! dear me, I do hope soon, as we are so homesick for mother. She says in every letter that she misses us more and more. I think that a good sign, don't you?"

Daniel's pride in his wife was evident. He listened to her as she led in vivacious conversation. She was well *up on* opera, good plays and places of interest in New York and Washington, having attended school and spent two really delightful years in the capital.

Robert Wrenn enjoyed the quick, ready wit and complete assurance with which she discussed topics of the day. He said good night with reluctance, feeling that this first visit was only the beginning of many more.

Back in his apartment he walked the floor and the past with its wreckage loomed before him. Upon the grave of dead youth blossomed the eternal flower of hope. There is a law of compensation and his whole soul longed for his youth—the miserable selfish youth.

"Oh! to atone! These last months. Dora, always Dora," his mind traveled the long road of the years, back to the studio where little Dora Temple waited, worked and loved him.

The day he told her of his coming marriage, why was the past constantly confronting him? Far from the old scenes, he thought he could forget, yet each hour something took him back years.

One day as he sat waiting for his lunch, Daniel came in and glancing over the room he spied the man he was looking for.

"I dropped in to lunch with you and to tell you mother will be here today; just had a wire and Betty is coming down to meet her. Can't you come out for dinner to-night? I won't be happy until you meet the most important member of the family, Dora Temple Strange."

Robert Wrenn flushed, then went pale. He stuttered for a word.

"Dora, did you say—Dora Temple Strange and 'Dore' are one and the same person?"

"Sure," said Daniel. "Why, old man, you are upset."

"I am all right—there is nothing wrong. I once knew a young artist, Dora Temple. I think

I purchased her first exhibit, 'Nature,' nearly thirty years ago. I have wondered many times what became of her. No artist gave more promise of fame—the directness, the light touch, all in her favor. She left Bohemia as quietly as she came."

Wrenn talked fast and nervously. "I am dreadfully sorry that a previous engagement prevents my renewing an old acquaintance. I think I will be justified in saying an old friendship."

Placing an arm upon the young man's shoulder, Wrenn said:

"My boy"—(trying to keep the tremble out of his voice)—"I will not wait many hours to make a visit to your home." (Looking at his watch.) "I am due for a conference."

Daniel said good day and hurried along.

Robert Wrenn ordered a brandy. His nerves were tingling—the hand of fate constantly winding was tightening the cord.

"*My son, my son*, my sins have found me out," he wailed. "Help me, Oh! Lord, to be strong and show me the way!"

In his apartment he paced the floor.

Sim, used to his master's moods, was much disturbed. His high-ball untouched, and all night his brain burned. Daniel Strange must be the

child he had cast into the world. With the realization that Daniel was *his son*, pride began to take possession of him. In a blinding flash a glimmer of the truth struck through the tangled haze of his mind and he saw ruin, a man with his youth burned on the altar of folly, before false gods—a man besmirched and scarred with the things men do out in their world.

Instantly a thought fastened itself in his mind—justice—reparation—a way to right a wrong, but how?

As he sat gazing into space, trying to look into the mystery beyond, the one great truth blazed its way and wrote in letters of burning fire upon his soul:

"I want Dora."

His head dropped upon his arms and he cried passionately: "I want you and your love, I want to make up to you for all the past. I must prove to you I can be the man you once believed me to be. I can't undo the past. Oh! God, if only I could. Dora, give me the chance."

A drowning sailor who knows the treachery of the sea still hopes and grasps at the overcrowded lifeboat, and so he let faint hope soften the misery of his soul.

He hoped, he prayed that in some undefined way the evening of his life might be guided into the safe harbor of home. A sudden desire to force Dora into the paths of yesterday—then the face of Daniel confronted him—the link that bound Dora to the world, for whom she had braved adversity, and carried the “scarlet letter” on her breast, hidden by years of servitude, the son she adored. Now, after all these years, could he be the means of making her suffer more? No, no, ten thousand times, No!

As a critic gazes upon a canvas of one of “the old masters,” Robert Wrenn saw the past, every detail—the studio, its furnishings—the last time he saw Dora there, the *girl*, changed over night into a woman—a woman scorned, whose mother love was flooding her entire being. Nothing mattered save the child, which seemed then just an unlucky accident—a circumstance for which he was ready to pay in dollars, the nurse with the serious face as she took the youngster away.

As he studied the picture how contemptible he was in his own eyes. The girl mother begging a name for *his* ‘son. How surprised and disappointed when he next went to the studio and found it closed, a “For Rent” sign on the door.

Everything he had given her was there, all the collections of art she had so loved. He missed nothing save a few personal things she had owned. Even now a chill passed over him as he thought of those cold rooms. Oh! she must be only gone for a few days. There was no disorder—the music still on the piano, *their song*. In the bedroom the exquisite ivory still lay on the dressing table. As one seeking the unknown he wandered about the rooms. In the closets hung the filmy, dainty gowns he loved, the big hats he called rakish—nothing could he miss from her wardrobe. In the window his comfortable chair, the low stool close by, the ash tray, his dressing gown and slippers, all ready, waiting, begging for the old time happiness. At the cellarette he mixed a drink. “Just a trick of Dora’s,” he thought, “I will wait here until she comes. I wouldn’t have her know what a jolt she has given me.”

The drink, the good cigar while serving to quiet his nerves, did little to lessen the pain in his breast as he sat and smoked among the rare mahogany and paintings and bric-a-brac brought from foreign countries, as miserable a chap as could be found in New York. When he swore to Dora he loved her, he had meant it. How could

he explain to the little artist in the Bohemian village who had fired his senses and captured his imagination as no other woman ever could, that she belong to the gay, irresponsible part of his life.

Never having been thrown with a girl so unsophisticated and guileless as Dora, it had never occurred to him she would expect marriage. Of course, he had known from the first she was different from other girls who swarm to New York seeking fame, fortune and pleasure, and for that very reason he determined their friendship should be above the common idea.

Fate had taken the matter out of his hands. Dora's appeal to him—before she brought shame upon her name—his promise quickly given, but put off from day to day. How he shivered when she told him—yet he thought he loved her.

As he mused and dreamed, he was convinced she had given him the pure love of her Virgin heart and he was filled with strange emotion, partly shame, partly exultation. She had loved and trusted him and he had failed her. As this conviction sank deeper, a desire to hold her in his arms rushed over him—once more to establish the old confidence. Surely she would come 'ere

morning; 'tis only a ruse just to see how much I care.

He realized now to have her all his own, he must marry Dora—the only restitution possible. To do so would be to commit the one unpardonable sin of his class. The tortured human instrument that held the soul of Robert Wrenn pounded away. He raised his hand and stared around the room, then out into the square.

The arch was a ghostly outline against the sky, the moon was coming up and he knew it by the silvery points, just such a moon as they had watched climb the shadowy sky together many times, it seemed always. The constellations made their slow journey across the heavens and the night passed.

For an hour rebellion raged within him and he paced the floor in moods of stunned bewilderment. He stood and stared at the objects around him, as each one spoke of her. This room, now his torture chamber, knew her irresistible laugh; these books, pictures, everything was a part of her.

“Oh! Dora, come back to me.”

The sun was high, the workmen passed through the square and happy children ran errands before going to school; old men paused for rest on the





"My sins have found me out—Dora—my son—if I could only undo the past—help me, O Lord, and show me the way!"

benches; nurse maids rolled their charges leisurely through the park. With a terrible misgiving, a sense of loss, he hurried through the quiet hall, away from the haunted studio.

Several persons turned and looked at him as he passed them, for he walked like a man in a great hurry, a man breaking his neck to keep a vital appointment. But in truth he was walking because he couldn't keep still; he must move, he must find Dora.

The day, which seemed unending, was spent going from one place to another, and he was determined to leave nothing undone that would help him find Dora.

Sim touched his arm. Robert Wrenn startled and came quickly back to the present.

"Sir, will you not have something,—a high-ball, coffee?" asked Sim. "All right; you sit here. You are very pale and I fear, sir, you are ill."

Wrenn motioned the man from the room. Sim, a faithful servant, had never seen his master like this. He must have had a terrible shock, a great loss.

After an hour trying to realize if he had dreamed or really lived over the days spent with Dora, and if "Dore" the artist was the same won-

derful creature who lived in Bohemia? Was Daniel Strange—the small boy he remembered holding the nurse by the hand—saying “goodbye, mother?” He rang for Sim, eat his breakfast in a half hour and then had a cold shower and change of linen.

The man of the world had gotten a grip on himself and his better judgment persistently counseled him. One does not whine or yelp at Fate, but the thing had been so sudden. It was up to him now, to act the part that had fallen to him and he would wait the hour.

One thing he knew—no breath of slander should touch Daniel. The one thing he could do, was the hardest task of all, remain his friend and counselor, and not by word or deed betray the woman who alone in her own strength had worked, depending upon no man and won independence limited only by herself, freedom from the petty sneers of conventional people, honored among men. With love she had labored—the full realization of her work, the fruits of years of loneliness and misery—were now in bloom and her happiness, the crown of her glory—Daniel—for every woman who knows herself to be a woman *Love and success are one*, and so it was with Dora Temple. Daniel was

a child of *love, not sin*. *Success* for him meant love, love and devotion to him meant success. She knew no tired hour.

CHAPTER XII.

Weeks and months fairly flew by in the days that followed Dora's return from Arizona, so happy were they in the grand preparation for a most wonderful event. When Daniel would leave for his office, Betty would gather her work basket and the dainty materials that were as soft as thistledown. Joining Dora in her studio, she would sit and fashion the tiny garments so dear to a mother's heart.

In the expectation of the child, Dora had ceased to *fear*, for she only wanted to be of service to Betty. The mother heart lived a-new, her boy's child, a welcome little stranger. Already he was spoken of freely in the family. Betty had suffered all the ills attendant to motherhood. For weeks she lay like a wilted flower, her life in danger. Medical men advised *the one* remedy, so welcome to many women. Betty, always pleading for the little life so near her heart, "I will soon be all right," was always her cherry greeting.

The terrible period had passed, the bloom was in her cheeks and happy songs upon her lips proclaimed to the world the joy of living.

One by one the little garments accumulated. Dora often laid aside brushes to sit and fondle the dainty things.

"What beautiful work you do, dear—such tiny stitches."

Betty would answer with a smile, "Oh! it must be lovely and beautiful, and all for Daniel!"

Then a cloud would creep into her eyes—if anything should happen.

"Nothing will happen, dear; just the most wonderful thing in the world. We will have a real baby—then I will not have to spoil you and Daniel so. Anyway, mother, if we are the least bit disappointed and a little girl comes to live with us, her name shall be *Dora*. I begin to feel that it will not be fair to call the baby anything that does not mean you, for you are the most wonderful mother in all the world."

Each day passed in happy anticipation.

Daniel deeply busied in the work that had accumulated and new clients were seeking constantly his counsel. He had lunch frequently with Robert Wrenn, to whom he had confided the joy he felt in the coming event. He discussed very freely his ideas of the relation that should exist between parent and child.

Wrenn, trying to keep up his character of worldly thoughtlessness, laughed heartily at Daniel's open frankness which he greatly admired down in his heart and the sacred recess of his soul how he loved this young Westerner. What would he not give to be able to throw off the mask and say "*my son?*"

As he sat through these midday meals with the young lawyer and over cigars and coffee discussed intimate topics, Robert Wrenn realized the full truth that though a man build up the fortune of Croesus—and has no children to dwell around him—he is but a poor man.

At last the day dawned when nature would release the child bound to Betty's heart. The nurse, the doctors, everything was in readiness—no needful care was lacking. Daniel felt helpless as he stood by. Most men feel like that when they face the thought of a woman going down to the deathly valley alone and helpless while they stand by safe and powerless like cowards on the river bank watching a child battle with the currents for life.

The hours dragged. Dora with all her heart tried to comfort Daniel as the great danger loomed up before him. He was frantic. He could not let

her go. The doctors and the nurse were doing everything in human power, but they could not hide from him the fear that death was very near.

He remembered that Betty's mother gave her life at such a time and now he could only wait for some word from the sick room—wait for what? He couldn't live without her.

Dora came into the room and the fear in her eyes set him trembling. He couldn't ask the questions formed in his mind.

"*My boy, you have a son.*"

"But, Betty, mother, tell me, is she all right?"

"We fear the worst—but so long as she is alive we hope."

The great sorrow in his face, the trembling form, the misery in each line of his features, froze the words of consolation she was so anxious to give. "Only with silence as their benediction God's angels come. When in the shadow of a great affliction the soul sits dumb," so they sat hand in hand waiting for some word.

Every sound, every footstep caused an indrawn breath. The door opened softly and the nurse with her well-trained self-control spoke to Daniel. "She has asked for you. Please be very brave and sit by quietly for we have hope."

Kneeling by the bed he kissed the dear face. A smile passed over the palid face, in half recognition. The small black head he saw and the red wrinkled face belonged to *his son*.

"My son," he whispered, and taking one of the tiny hands he toyed with it, inwardly praying that God would spare them both to him.

For days with patient care the two were watched with loyal affection. Today Betty was to sit out in the sunporch and she was radiant with happiness. Grandfather Bland would be here in a little while to see the most wonderful baby in the world.

There had been no argument over the youngster's name for Betty was allowed to have her way, but she seemed greatly pleased when Dora suggested that she thought Daniel Bland a splendid name.

"You know, dear, he can safely take after either namesake," said Dora.

Just as soon as Betty would be able to take part in the real festivities of a christening, there would be a family party. Uncle and Auntie Bland were very impatient to see Betty's boy. The happy day arrived, and Daniel insisted that a number of his friends be invited.

"Don't you know, dear, how proud I will be—and how envious the chaps will feel? We will have a real celebration," said Daniel.

When Robert Wrenn tried to plead former engagements, Daniel insisted upon him coming to see his boy baptized.

"Do you know you haven't been to see us for months—you really haven't been out since mother came. You know how very busy they were—so interested in the little fellow, I began to feel a little jealous. I tell you, my friend, I will not take *no*. We will expect you Sunday at 12 o'clock."

At leaving Daniel took the older man by the hand and standing proudly erect placed the other hand upon his shoulder and said:

"You don't know what it means to ask your friends in to see the sacred rite of the church—that satisfies your vows—especially when it is a *junior*."

Daniel left him with the promise that he would be on hand. Robert Wrenn knew that he would surely meet Dora. What would he say? What would she do?

Had he known her as you readers do, he would have had no need for worry. She had schooled herself for the inevitable—the meeting—and it

held no fear for her. The cold, cynical eyes of the world should not gloat over her. She would meet him as "Dore" the artist, the mother of Daniel Strange, the rising young man who was fast becoming the most sought after lawyer in the West, the man whose clients came from far and near.

The friends gathered in the Strange home were genuinely happy, the whole house was wearing the holiday decorations and flowers nodded from every corner. The October chill necessitated fire in the grates. Daniel welcomed his guests in the spacious hall and a hush fell upon the crowd as the priest took his stand in front of an improvised altar.

Robert Wrenn stood leaning upon the back of a Roman chair. The priest had begun to read the sacred baptismal service. Martha with the child came down the stairs, followed by Betty, beautiful in her motherhood. For an instant his heart ceased to beat.

Dora, her hair snowy white, piled high—the years had been kind, her beauty of character, of intelligence, the regal bearing, proclaimed a woman of strength not afraid of the judgment of man. This was her hour as her glance met his.

Without pause she advanced poisedly, while Wrenn could only stare dazedly as at a vision. The next instant they stood face to face in the broad hall, banked with palms and flowers, and as their eyes met both went white. We seldom rise to our epic moments, all the prayers for reparation, all the suffering of years, found no expression in speech. The solemn service filled the room, the benediction and blessing upon the company.

Dora stepped forward to receive the infant. Congratulations, pleasant and happy wishes were freely indulged—while Daniel, proud father, passed the boy around to be duly admired.

Robert Wrenn succeeded in paying the accustomed compliments, finding features of both father and mother splendidly developed. He found himself very near Dora, who made no effort to speak to him.

"Dora," he said, extending his hand, "may I renew an old friendship, and may I have the honor of your personal conduct through your studio?"

With the slightest quiver in her voice, but no outward sign of nervousness, she answered quickly: "I will be pleased to show you my workshop, for I think I must owe you part of my success as you

bought my first exhibit, and that gave me courage to pursue the tedious studies. Oh! art is a long road filled with many disappointments, yet the gulf that yawns so wide when you look at it from the right side seems so narrow when you have crossed it."

The door closed and they were alone. Looking down at her he whispered, "Dora!"

She spoke quickly: "You and I sealed our fate years ago—it is too late. I wish to remember nothing. All the days before I came here seem very far away."

A great aching cry was surging up from her very soul, a protest against the pain that was in the world.

"Dora, let me find a way to make amends for I, too, have suffered. I tried to find you. I realized when you had gone what you really were to me. Let me dedicate the rest of my life to you—to Daniel—our boy."

A smile of derision and exaltation played on her features.

"So you are willing now to acknowledge him? No, neither Daniel nor I need you. The only reparation you can make or kindness you can do is to live your life as you have chosen without us

and keep from him the knowledge that his father lives. As for me, there was a time when you were the sum and substance of my existence; but, happily, I have grown into a modern woman, and thinking along new lines, I have learned to adjust myself to conditions. My work has been rewarded and the hours of anguish have passed. I have made my own individual corner in life, and if I am not happy I am contented. The happiness of Daniel makes up for everything I have missed. We started on the voyage in a wonderful vessel, *Love*—but when the first storm came you deserted the ship. I fought my way back through waves of despair. I found this harbor and am I asking too much when I beg you to leave me in peace; let me pass these last years in the happiness of this home? Tell me of yourself. I have listened to Daniel while he spoke of you. I feared at first, and like a coward I ran away. Then I thought of the ship that was deserted at the first sign of danger, and I came back prepared to face any ordeal. Will you do as I ask?"

The stooped figure leaning upon the mantel, seemed to have aged years.

"Yes! yes! I will do anything you ask of me, only one thing will you promise me—if there ever

comes a time when you think right, let me say '*Daniel, my son.*' "

Dora tried to stop him. In the unfolding of the life he made bare, he left no part untold. She listened to a resume of his infatuation for Fanny Gebhardt, the revenge she planned for wrongs done the sister she loved.

Covering her face with her hands, sobs convulsed the slim body and tears burned their way down her cheeks—little sister—poor little girl. She was spellbound with the accounts of Fanny's beauty, wealth and the good woman she was—for her charities were well established, and the poor of many sections of the great city knew her name well. When he had finished the story a burden seemed lifted.

"May I tell her where you are—all—of Daniel? Don't hide yourself longer. Let me go to her with this glorious news, the bearer of these happy tidings."

Dora walked to the window and with unseeing eyes stared into the distance. What should she do? Her soul was stripped of pretense and she was face to face with that great problem she thought solved. She saw the solid bulwarks of protection falling like card houses on all sides, and

the security she had schooled herself to believe was hers was nothing more or less than deception. What right had she to live longer in this masquerade?


With tear-dimmed eyes she turned toward him—with all the appeal in her nature. She knew he had made up his mind to one unalterable condition, and she saw calm determination in his white and rigid face.

He waited for her to speak. She gazed strangely at him, as from an impassable distance. With trembling hands she braced herself against the marble statue of Pan, whose whiteness matched the cold marble of her soul and her gown of soft white fell in folds of natural grace.

"*Twin statues*" could have been a name worthy the picture that Wrenn held there with his hypnotic gaze, realizing that the *woman* was more beautiful, more adorable than the radiant girl who attracted him in his wild mad days of youth.

The agony she endured had purged his love of all the baser elements. Folding his arms to keep from taking her in them he came close—so close she felt his breath.

"Oh! Dora, is it too late?"



At the tenderness of his voice, the adoration of his gaze, Dora's eyes widened into a sort of terror, for in spite of herself and her will every word fell upon her quivering heart.

"I deserve everything you can say to me; but, my darling, I have been punished—this day—and all these years," said Wrenn. "You will never know the anguish of my soul. God alone can see the depths of misery that misguided mortals are plunged into by blindness and cowardice. A life of devotion can never atone and I am not worthy of it, but the very strength of my love must compel your forgiveness. I stand before you a beggar—turn not away."

As he stood looking down upon her, memories of former emotions, of long forgotten caresses floated out of the past, while gradually the knowledge of her beauty enveloped him like a flame and fired him with the old youthful recklessness.

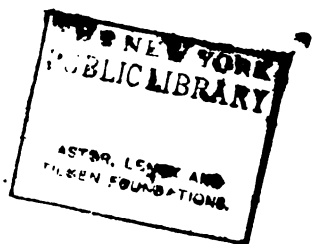
Could anything in life—any worthy purpose—any good one might do—any honor one might win, be so admirable as the *love* of this woman?

"Oh! to go back to the beginning, Robert. *Time* is a great healer, but at our age we can live for other things than love. I have *my children*—there are many big things calling for volunteers.



"Dora, I come to you a beggar—turn me not away!"

"Robert, you are not the only man who has failed the woman who loved, but today I stand before you with a purpose, with strength to carry out my convictions and at peace with the world."



Across the seas, war and devastation, starving women and children are turning their eyes to America, who has never failed in her assistance to humanity. You have wealth, health and education, why not go to them, fill the coming years with good deeds and seek out the helpless ones in France and Belgium? Go among them—give them cheer. Oh! there is so much waiting to be done.”

Her face had flushed with the excitement. Suddenly all color left her pale as before.

“If our country should be brought into this fight I tremble with fear. Daniel will be no slacker and he will not find refuge behind the skirts of his women folks, and should he go my duty is here—it is plain. I will take his place so far as I can. Betty would not urge him to stay. She is a real American—as I am—as you are. Go, Robert. You are not the only man who has failed the woman who loved and gave from out the darkness of the night. Let your spirit, your soul rise to meet the dawning of the future. Those days are past; *our days* were like a great flash of light blinding us and we forgot everything else. You know I have learned there is no gradation of right and wrong. I had broken the law—I must pay—but the price seemed almost more than I could

give, and yet the years have gone steadily by, the hardness, the bitterness have been purged from my soul. Today I stand before you a woman with a purpose, with strength to carry on my convictions, at peace with the world."

Laying her hand gently upon his, she continued: "You asked if you might tell Fanny of me, of Daniel. Yes! There is nothing in all the world that would add so much happiness to my life as to know she loved me. I would rather you wait until you are in New York. Maybe it wouldn't hurt so badly to tell it to her. The letter bearing the story would be cold. Make it clear to her. I have always loved my little sister. I think we had best join the others. With one long intense appeal I leave you, Robert, to judge what you shall say. I have told Daniel and Betty I was quite sure you were the same Robert Wrenn who helped so many struggling artists; that you purchased my crude exhibit 'Nature' and gave me my first order for a portrait—so you see the way is prepared. It is not strange for an artist to fail in New York, then seek new fields of endeavor."

"Here they are now," came from several, as Wrenn and Dora walked into the living room. Dora flushed, and Wrenn with a smile of sup-

pressed emotion, said: "My friends, this has been a splendid day—a most delightful occasion—but I have a story for you worthy of any page of romance. Imagine 'Dore' the artist being the same little 'Dora Temple' of Bohemia—a struggling artist, with youth and beauty—living among the village crowd. I, my dear friends, am proud to tell you I bought her first canvas and I gave her the first order for a portrait. She became impatient waiting for wealth and fame and in the night went out of our crowded midst. There is no use for me to speak of what she has done here as she has shown me through the studio, where men of affairs are on the waiting list, to be painted by 'Dore.' "

Through this little speech Dora stood flushed, but smiling. Daniel and Betty were genuinely proud of "mother."

Dinner was announced. Daniel at the head of the table dispensed such hospitality as one reads of in novels of the old South, and the guests joined freely in good-natured banter over liqueurs and cigars, stories and reminiscences of the West, kept the company highly entertained until well into the afternoon. Goodbyes were said with happy wishes for the young son and congratulations for the proud parents.

Robert Wrenn drove home without regard for speed laws, trying to plan something yet intangible in his whirling brain. 'Tis hard for us to see the mistakes are all ours. The gardener plants rightly—herbs are meant for us, we ask for roses. 'Tis not every garden in which roses will bloom, so his conviction grew—that his own hand destroyed the flower. No one ever gained anything by dodging the truth, and understanding does not come to us. We must seek it. So Robert Wrenn *knew and understood.*

Almost in the twinkling of an eye he had made up his mind to help the helpless, for in doing for others his atonement would begin. The affairs of the Wrenn estate should be settled. In a foreign land orphans and war cursed countries would be the field of his endeavor. In healing broken hearts—maybe—the dull everlasting ache of his own would grow weaker. In his dream he stood with the wonderful workers among the wounded, taking a dying message here, giving aid there, handling the young children huddled in shell-riddled huts. Everywhere about him was work to be done. So with early dawn he awoke, looking about the luxuriously furnished rooms and hardly able to realize that the service he had rendered

to the dying was only a dream. God in his own wise way had confirmed the command, "Go thou to the aid of thy brother."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Show the gentleman in here, Mrs. Palmer," slowly reading the heavily engraved card the maid had brought in.

The room was once the ballroom of her Fifth Avenue home, the scene of many wonderful parties, where gathered the wealth and fashion of New York, all anxious to be chronicled in society's columns as among the guests of Mrs. Timothy Gebhardt's "At Home."

Society for the proverbial nine days was thrown into a whirl of gossip when it waked up one morning to see in the headlines of their early paper the announcement of the wedding of Dr. Amos Palmer, an eminent surgeon, to Mrs. Fanny Gebhardt, the wealthy widow of Timothy Gebhardt.

It was with disappointment that the weeks went by and no invitations reached the "smart set" for the entertainments that had been looked upon as the most lavish in the point of elegance and new features. Imagine what surprise was felt when it was an acknowledged fact that Dr. Palmer had gone abroad as the head of an American hospital,

and his wife had turned her ballroom into a Red Cross workroom. Long tables, where busy women, young and old, rolled bandages; knitting machines that nimble hands operated, turning out the heavy woolen socks for the soldiers marching on and on; sewing machines, singing loud their chant of victory as mothers of boys—not yet in service—made the warm garments to be sent to the hospitals “over there.”

Fanny stood among her busy workers in their white aprons and veils, with the blazing cross of service. She was thankful that she was able to *do* her “bit.” Scarcely a boat left for France that did not carry boxes of these comfortable garments to be distributed by her noble husband, who had answered the call of France. At last the great wealth of “Tim” *the good natured* man who craved to be “*one of 'em*” was spreading cheer to unfortunates—and not buying its way to the 400.

Fanny turned when she heard her name. With a kindly smile she greeted her visitor and the hand she extended was steady and her voice calm.

“I am, as you see, a worker, instead of the rather dissipated man belonging to New York’s night life.”

Robert Wrenn, grayer, bronzed by western winds, dressed in the brown uniform of a Y. M. C. A. worker, stood before her.

"*You, too,*" the face looking into his, and the deep purpose in her eyes told him plainly her heart was "over there."

"Yes, Fanny, I have established a canteen," he said. "I am going over to be a big brother. At last I have found myself, and I am going to do my bit for humanity. I sail to-morrow. I knew you would do something like this," as he gazed around the room where the busy machines and fingers were steadily working.

"I wanted to go over with my husband, but he persuaded me I could be of more service here."

As they stood looking out over the snow covered park he tried to speak of Dora—but the clumsy knot in his throat seemed to grow larger. Making an effort to speak quietly, he said:

"May I have a few words with you—alone? A subject dear to us both."

Without hesitating she led the way to the end of the long room. At the door she turned and said: "Come right into my office. I will give a few orders and be with you in a few moments."

As he stood alone he remembered well this room—"The Den" or smoking room—for many times he had sat here with "Tim" and the congenial spirits that gathered around him. A very different place it was now—a plain desk, telephone and a few chairs had taken the place of cellaret, cigar receiver, ash trays and comfortable leather lounging furniture; the rare collections of pipes and trophies of the hunt were missing. As he was mentally taking in all these changes Fanny entered.

"Yes. This is the business end of *my* work. There are so many ends and yards of red tape to wind and unwind in my efforts that I must have a place just like this."

Drawing a chair in front of the one she had motioned him to take, she showed that she was ready for the story or confidence he wished to impose.

Without preliminary, Robert Wrenn went into the fullest detail of his life in Colorado—Bob's death, his meeting with Daniel Strange, a young lawyer—the admiration that grew constantly for the ambitious young chap. His voice trailed away as gently he repeated how Daniel had told him that "Dore" the artist was his mother. The shock

—almost unbelievable fact—that “Dore” and *Dora Temple* were the same person. The day of the christening—the studio, no detail was left untold. They were both silent.

“I do not like to think of that part of my life—it is past—it is done. I fully believe that there is a psychological turning point in every person’s life, where the old can be taken off like an ugly garment—never to be tried again. Some find it in religion, some in charity. I have found it in Daniel, *my son*. I can never claim him, or hear him call me father. Fanny, Dora waits for a word from you—need I ask?”

Before he could finish the sentence the wonderful glow of happiness, the tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, assured him of the peace that his message had brought. He knew not many days would pass until “little sister” would be folded close to Dora’s breast and the aching heart would once more know the joy of reunion.

After the hour spent in the first part of his mission, Robert Wrenn bade her goodbye, and with earnest meaning she wished him God speed—adding without any trace of bitterness:

“We were just links in a chain of circumstances which have brought unhappiness and regret, but

the skies are clearing, and we have but proven that there never has been—*save one*—a life without mistakes. The man who can acknowledge his sins, who tries to atone, and the woman who does the best she can to live over one great wrong, has found greater happiness and has more true worth than the woman of so called *caste*—with numerous *affairs* to her credit.”

A moment they gazed steadily into eyes dim with unshed tears. Fanny returned to the work-room. She helped to adjust the tangled threads of a very young knitter, she gave a word of encouragement here and there. The women, who had grown to love her—not only for the good she was doing—but for herself—saw a new light in her smile. At the close of the day she helped them arrange their piles of work, and each envelope she gave held an extra day's pay to gladden the earnest workers. There were no volunteer society girls in Fanny's shop. “*Her bit*” was also her charity, for the women employed were those dependent upon their own efforts for a livelihood. A feeling of relief passed over her as she saw the last one depart, for she was eager to be alone, to pour out the pent-up feelings of years to Dora. The curtains were drawn, and she sat with the old

faded likeness of the sister she loved and had mourned as dead.

The joy of finding her had completely overpowered her senses. She wanted to write, but there were no words she could find to express her feelings. Her hand held the pen, but she did not try to guide the thoughts laid down.

"Sister mine, dear, dear one, Robert Wrenn has just left me. I am so stunned, so happy. How can I write all these things that fill my soul? I want you, dear—my arms are aching for you—I am coming. He has told me so much, such wonderful things of you and Daniel. I can't realize it. You are just a sweet, glorious mystery to me at present—a most glorious riddle—which I will never give up. Dora, dear, I wonder if there can be a greater thing than love, a better thing than happiness? To-night I am happy, happy that I have found you, who through all these years I have loved. Dear one, sometimes the price of love is greater than we should be called upon to pay. I know all the sorrow that has darkened your life—now—the sun will shine—we will remember nothing, there is no yesterday—only today and tomorrow. I cannot wait for a letter to tell me you are waiting, wire me the one word, *Come*. Then

sister mine, the train can not go swift enough to bear me to *you*. Your heart, dear, shall find rest upon my breast, little sister.

"Mrs. Amos Palmer, 900 Fifth Avenue, New York City."

The letter sealed she rang for the maid.

"Take this to the letter box."

She did not read what she had written. She was so anxious to feel that her message was on the way. She dismissed her maid—preferring to be alone. Sleep seemed very far away. With a book she tried to woo the little god—finally her eyelids dropped—the smiles that now and then played about her dainty mouth told of wonderful dreams.

Science contends that our dreams are only a flash—yet we travel miles and miles—go back to childhood, live the playtime and feel the realization of childish romances. The future looms a beautiful vista, yet 'tis only the twinkling of an eye.

Fanny awoke early with her dreams vividly before her. She had her breakfast earlier than usual, then went to her workroom. Her hands were full—for she was mentally making plans for her expected absence. The work would be left in

capable hands—the housekeeper was receiving full instructions, and no small detail of her affairs would be neglected. The happy assured calmness that fell upon her gave evidence to those with whom she came in contact that Mrs. Palmer had received cheerful news. She quietly packed the things she wished to take with her. She attended to the Christmas shopping. The boy, although very young, must have toys such as New York supplies to Santa Claus for wealthy boys and girls. Every hour of her time was filled. Numerous charities must not suffer on account of her absence.

It was now the third day since the letter had gone to Dora, and any moment the bell might announce the telegram. After writing a long letter to her husband telling him the glad news, she felt that the last detail had been attended to. When Fanny consented to wed Dr. Palmer, she had given him a complete resume of her affair with Robert Wrenn, leaving out no detail that might affect their future. She well knew the good man would approve of her journey.

The maid appeared and the yellow envelope that lay upon the silver tray brought all the blood in her body to her head. She almost reeled—her

hands trembled. "No answer," she said to the maid. Tearing the envelope she read over and over—"Am so happy—come. Dora."

CHAPTER XIV.

The front door opened and Daniel came in with the gust of wind and snow. "Whee! Some blizzard. I think we are in for a regular storm, such as we haven't had for years."

Betty stood with young Daniel in her arms, watching her husband divest himself of his fur coat.

"Mother and I are going to scold you—you haven't taken us into your confidence—why didn't you tell us?" showing the evening paper and pointing to his picture, with startling headlines. "We are so proud of you," came from both women at once.

Smiling at their interest, he tossed his cigar into the grate.

"Well! I hardly knew it myself, the delegates came to me and stated their business—they said they had picked me out of all the eligible men in the city of a hundred thousand to accept the nomination for district attorney on an independent ticket, to fight two powerful parties. Machine politics have become more corrupt each year. My .

record has been carefully searched, and I stand for right. There is no graft to my credit, and if I am elected I will spare no criminal negligence. I shall wade into this clean-up head and shoulders. The gamblers, sharks and bootleggers will have to hunt for new fields."

As they seated themselves for dinner, he took from his pocket several letters.

"Mail for both of you, almost forgot it. Two for you, mother—more congratulations for Betty," as he tossed her several letters. "All the friends congratulate her on *her son*, and it seems *I* am not recognized in the family."

"But, dear, everybody congratulates *me* on having such a wonderful husband. No one ever says a word of how fortunate you are in your *wife*," and leaning over to her he patted the little hand that lay beside her plate.

"Indeed, yes! Every day some fine fellow throws me a lot of bouquets about *my wife*."

"Dora, busy reading her letter, had not heard one word that her children were saying, but her face went white, her lips trembled, the happy tears were coursing down her cheeks.

Both Betty and Daniel stopped their pleasantries at once—noticing the tears Dora could not hide.

“Oh! what is it, mother? Read, dear—I am too happy, too excited to speak—my little sister—at last, for years we have lost sight of each other—each believing the other dead—now we are really to be united. Romance is not dead and each day goes to prove *truth* is stranger than fiction.”

After dinner, in the library, with the lights turned low, Dora sat between the children she so loved—they begged her for the story. Her mood was one of confession, for the repression of all these years had reached its climax. The only interruption was the kisses and handclasps that grew tighter as she slowly unfolded the past.

At the end a sigh so deep that it penetrated their souls came from her heart. Daniel leaned to her—as a father would cradle an infant. He took his mother to his breast, with both arms about her, his face pressed to hers.

“Mother mine,” he said, “my dear, sacrificing mother, I always knew you were waiting for something; that you had stepped aside from life’s current to *wait*. Now it is our happy duty to make

the past, past—you are the bravest, most wonderful being in the world.”

Betty, kneeling by them, was trying to assure the mother she loved that no more dark days were ahead. Then the real cheery nature of the young wife came pouring forth in wonderful plans for Aunt Fanny's visit.

“Oh! such a Christmas time—isn't it splendid to think that all these joyful tidings have come at such a fitting time? A real, “peace on earth”—Daddy, Auntie and Uncle Bland—isn't it grand! Daniel, junior, is surely the luckiest baby in the world.”

An evening that had bordered upon tragedy ended in the very happiest anticipation of Christmas time. The ten days fairly flew, so much shopping and planning to be done. Aunt Fanny would be here today—next week Auntie and Uncle Bland, “daddy” most any day. Truly the home that is founded and builded upon love can live and smile through all adversities.

We will not try to tell of the meeting of the sisters so long separated. There are times in every life when curtains should be dropped long enough for the readjustment of lives. Daniel and Betty thoughtfully stole away, leaving Dora and Fanny

alone—where unseen and unheard their hearts could speak freely and when evening came all shadows were past. The roses in their cheeks, the merry laughter dispelled all gloom. The family of Bland had arrived. The heir to the wealth and love of both clans was in a perfect glee over toys that were showered upon him. Brilliant lights, Christmas decorations of holly and mistletoe were everywhere—giving out happy cheer.

Dora looking over the happy scene—wondered if it were a dream. The fruits of her labor, her love—her right to happiness, after years of pent up emotion. She looked at Daniel—*her son*, and smiled contentedly. She could ask no greater blessing than to be the mother of such a man, and she heard the merriment in the hall and joined them. All through the evening the house rang with peals of joyous laughter and stories of Christmas cheer and good will were passed along.

Promptly at twelve o'clock the doors of Dora's studio were thrown wide—the secret that had been hidden from Daniel and Betty was revealed. There blazed in hundreds of lights *the tree* and such a Christmas tree—no cost, no pains had been spared by Fanny and Dora. With the help of

faithful Martha, something for each one—gifts selected with thoughtful care.

A peal from the door bell caused a quiet moment. A special delivery letter for Daniel Bland Strange. All crowded around Daniel to see what the letter, coming at such an hour, meant.

“My Dear Daniel: Enclosed is a check for you, your Christmas. I am leaving New York for France. I hope to come back, and if I do I will see you. Your father has been my friend; your mother was kind to the boy I loved and claimed. I have no heirs, and this check is the foundation of your fortune. If I live, each Christmas you will receive the same amount until you are twenty-one. At my death, I have provided for you. May you grow to be the man your father has proven himself. All Christmas greetings to your esteemed family. Sincerely,

ROBERT WRENN.”

The check held in the hand of Betty fluttered with the nervous trembling she couldn't hide—the amount, \$10,000, was read by each one present.


“There must be a great soul under Mr. Wrenn's cold exterior,” said Uncle Bland. “I knew he was mighty hard hit by young Bob's death, although he didn't say much. Sounds as if he was mighty

blue, and it must be lonesome not to have any folks," came from Grandpa Bland.

Martha helped the situation greatly when she announced *eggnogg*. True to the old Southern custom, she had the "*nogg*" just at the stroke of twelve—to drink the merry greetings to all gathered.

The spell that seemed over Daniel, Betty, Dora and Fanny was lifted, and they toasted the traveler on his journey, wishing him health and a safe return. Then the voice of Daniel rose above the rest—"May he find happiness to the end of his days," the glasses clinked and were drained—the sincerity of the wish fell upon them. The health of the *son* of the house followed. It was near morning before the lights were out and quiet reigned.

Dora sat in front of the dying embers—a mother dreads no memories. Those shadows have all melted away in the dawn of baby's smiles—love is the beginning, the middle and the end of everything. Life gives us only moments, but for those moments we give a lifetime. Dora had wiped all bitter thoughts from her—with beautiful thoughts in your mind you have always a garden flower. Off—into the undreaded future she sped, she



spoke across the wide spaces that only dreams can bridge. Those who belong to each other spiritually, will find each other and dwell together through eternities of love.

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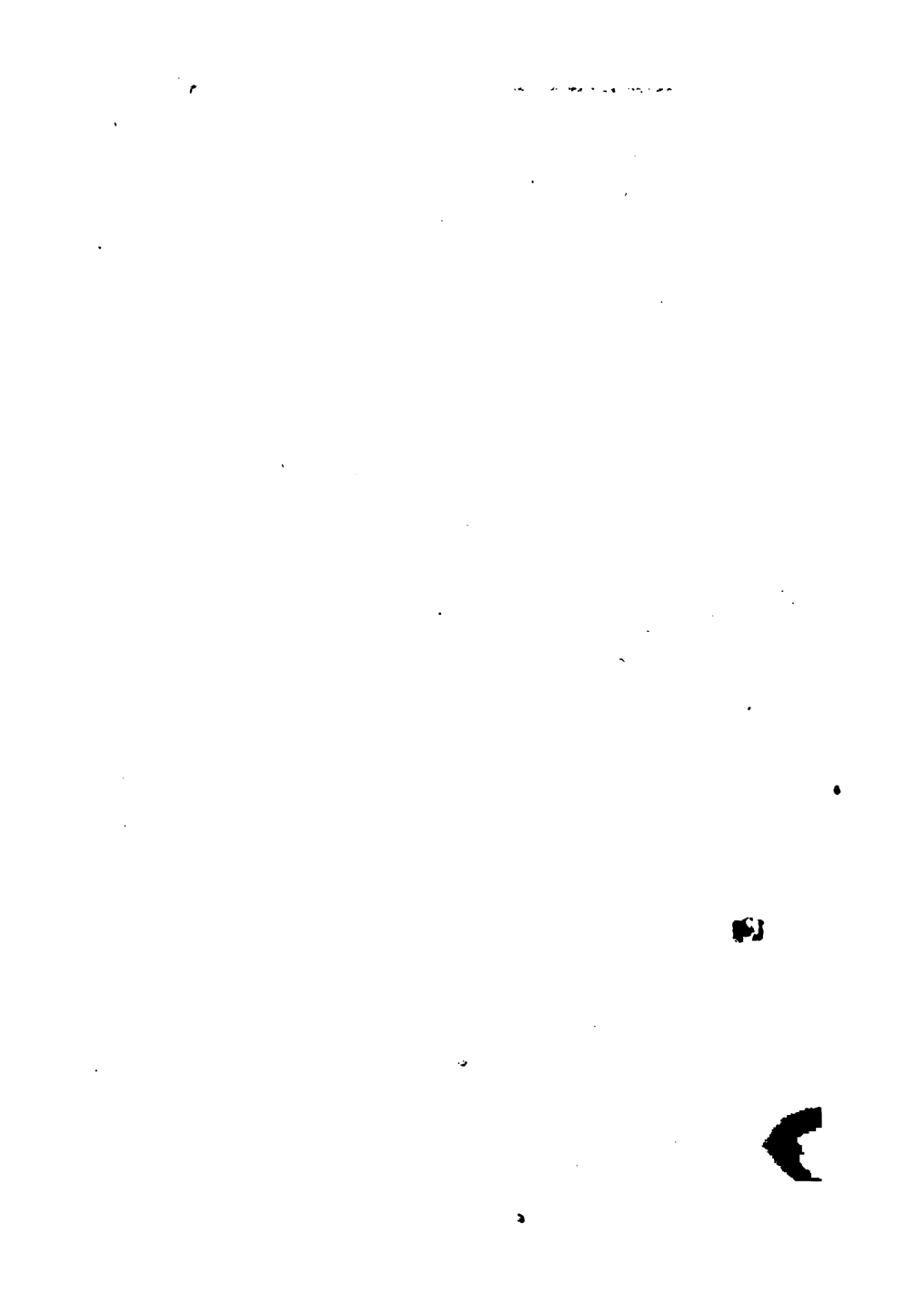
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